

COMMUNICATION, COMMITMENT, INTIMACY, AND  
DYADIC PERCEPTION IN LASTING MARRIAGES:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK ASSESSMENT  
AND COUPLE THERAPY

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**Communication, Commitment, Intimacy, and Dyadic Perception  
in Lasting Marriages: Implications for Social  
Work Assessment and Couple Therapy**

**Prepared By: Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.  
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**ABSTRACT**

The main direction of much research on the clinical and theoretical applications of marital and family counselling focuses on pathology. The position of this inquiry is that clinicians need more knowledge regarding positive models of family and marital functioning as guidelines for assisting families and couples experiencing problems. This inquiry focuses on family strengths and marital satisfaction in lasting marriages. Data from 67 couples, who have been married for 15 years or more, is analyzed to describe those characteristics associated with family strengths and lasting marriages. Particular reference is made to those characteristics which exist in strong families/lasting marriages - communication, commitment, intimacy, and dyadic perceptions. The concepts were operationalized using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) (Snyder, 1981) and a thirty-one item questionnaire devised by the researcher. Included in this study was the Family Strengths Scale (Olson, 1985), which was used to operationalize family strengths. The questionnaires were hand delivered or mailed to respondents who volunteered

to participate in the study. Some of the data obtained supports a U-Shaped curvilinear trend in marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle. The data also supports the premise that the longer the lasting marriage, the stronger the family strengths and the higher the level of marital satisfaction. This study offers some suggestions for more expansive research which explores the characteristics of strong families and lasting marriages.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*This study investigates communication, perception, commitment and intimacy in lasting marriages. In addressing lasting marriages, this study meets a need for empirical research. The findings provide knowledge for social work assessment, counselling and therapy in intervention with couples. The findings also provide some direction for prevention of marital dissolution with existing marriages and second marriages.*

*This inquiry begins by examining some of the literature and research on family and marital strengths. A theoretical position is taken that defines marital relationships and satisfaction in terms of a cognitive-interactive theory base.*

*In contrast to more traditional studies of family dysfunction and marital dissolution, this study focuses on the question, "What are the characteristics of lasting marriages?"*

**A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

***Family Strengths/Family Well-Being***

The concepts of family and couple cannot be dissociated in addressing lasting marriages. It will be established that many characteristics of family strengths and marital strengths are overlapping. In approaching the concept of family, a forthcoming section of this inquiry will describe marital satisfaction as it is experienced throughout the family life cycle. The primary focus of this inquiry is on lasting marriages; however, it is first necessary to explore the concept of family functioning and how it relates to family strengths/family well-being.

Stinnett (1981) states:

The dream of facilitating strong families which produce emotionally and socially healthy individuals can be realized. This is a vitally important dream and should be a top priority in our nation, because strong families are the roots of our well-being as individuals and as a society (Stinnett, 1981, p. 3).



Waring (1983) summarizes that, "family therapists have consistently found that children with problems come from homes where there are disturbed husband-wife relationships" (p.43).

Throughout the history of social work practice, an effort is often made to identify and develop strengths in families and couples to improve the overall quality of their lives. Mary Richmond (1917) states, "Whatever eccentricities a family may develop, the trait of family solidarity, of hanging together through thick and thin, is an asset for the social worker, and one that he should use to the uttermost" (p. 139). If the objective is to facilitate strong families, it is first necessary to identify the characteristics that exist in strong and effective families.

A review of the literature indicates that there is relatively little research on the clinical study of couples or families who are healthy or function well (Beavers, 1985; Gantman, 1980; Stinnett, 1985; & Schlesinger, 1984). Traditionally, clinicians have viewed families in terms of pathology and with little focus on healthy family functioning (Walsh, 1989). 'Normal' family functioning is often based on the

therapist's subjective perception of normal family functioning. Kazak et al. (1989) explains that the therapist's concept of normal families may be different from the client's. The researchers explain that perceptions may vary between therapists of different origins. Therapist's subjective perceptions of normality may be influenced by their regular involvement with distressed families. Also, processes in the therapist's own family of origin may similarly influence their perceptions of normality (Kazak et al., 1989).

Of the literature that is available , much is associated with the theoretical perspective of systems theory (Barnhill, 1979; Beavers, 1985; & Gantman, 1980). In Barnhill's (1979) review of the literature, he identifies eight polar dimensions of healthy family functioning and pathology: individuality versus enmeshment, mutuality versus isolation, stability versus disorganization, clear versus unclear or distorted perception, clear versus unclear or distorted communication, flexibility versus rigidity, role reciprocity versus unclear roles or role conflict, and clear versus diffused or breached generational boundaries. From a system's theory perspective,

Barnhill (1979) believes that these dimensions are interrelated and can interact with one another in causing family problems.

Gantman (1980) asserts that because of the differing concepts of normality, the definition of a "normal family" is quite complex. She explains that in many instances, the definitions are limited in that they only account for individual functioning as opposed to the total family system. For this reason, she proposes a systems approach in describing the characteristics of well-functioning families. In comparison to disturbed families she identifies research findings which establish that well-functioning families are more effective in decision making; family members are more supportive of each other; they are expressive and communicate in noisy, discontinuous speech patterns; they have a well defined power structure; they have clear generational boundaries; family members show respect for each other's uniqueness; they have adaptive mechanisms to cope with disequilibrium, an atmosphere of autonomy with a warm and flexible family structure; and healthy families perceive reality accurately and accept change and loss (Gantman, 1980).

Gantman's (1980) systems perspective on family functioning is also reflected in the work of earlier systems-oriented theorists such as Virginia Satir. In Banmen's (1986) analysis of Satir's model of family therapy he identifies the following attributes which exist in functional families:

- (1) Family members experience caring, warmth, and tenderness.
- (2) Members are empathic, trusting, and open.
- (3) Members tolerate individuality and show respect for the view of others.
- (4) Members share power, do things together, and support each other.
- (5) Members share a sense of humour and fun.
- (6) There is an honesty in agreement and disagreement situations.
- (7) Members communicate directly.
- (8) Members have and share self-worth (Banmen, 1986, p. 481).

In response to a national forum to examine the strengths of American families, Tanner-Nelson and Banonis (1981) report on the efforts taken by the state of Delaware to identify family strengths. In one of many efforts, informal discussions were held with 25 families throughout the state. They were asked the

question, "what does a strong family need?" (Tanner Nelson & Banonis, 1981, p. 5). The most frequent response to the question included: love and concern, knowing you can talk about problems, commitment, sacrifice, doing things together, and understanding and respect for children.

Stinnett (1985) believes that the strengths and value placed on the family are factors which determine the strength of a nation. Through his research (Oklahoma Study) Stinnett (1985) and associates identified six qualities in strong families: (1) appreciation, (2) spending a lot of time together, (3) good communication (putting conflict in the open and discussing it), (4) a high degree of commitment, (5) a high degree of religious orientation, and (6) the ability to deal with stress in a positive manner and see some positive elements.

#### **Family Life Cycle - Marital Satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle does not necessarily follow a path of linear decline. There is evidence to support the belief that growth can exist at the later stages of the life cycle. Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick (1986) state; "The life cycle,

however, does more than extend itself into the next generation. It curves back on the life of the individual, allowing as we have indicated, a re-experiencing of earlier stages in a new form" (page 327). That is, these and other interpretations suggest that marital satisfaction changes throughout the life-cycle in a curvilinear U-shaped curve.

Based on Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick's (1986) analysis of marital satisfaction it would appear that satisfaction is based on the individual's subjective evaluation of how they perceive their situation. It is not the experiences per se but the perceptions and meaning derived from the situation and the meanings it has at the present time. In Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick's (1986) study of the later stages in the life cycle they describe that through their observations many of the elders were satisfied with their life choices and the people they married; even though individuals experienced profound "unhappiness" and "restlessness" in earlier periods of their lives. It appears that elderly people experience satisfaction in the later stages of the life cycle regardless of earlier experiences. These observations are congruent with the more general

cognitive-humanistic position in social work (Goldstein, 1984), that satisfaction is determined by the meaning derived from the couple's or individual's perception, interpretation and understanding of their situation and marriage.

Gilford and Bengtson (1979) reviewed studies that show a linear decline in marital satisfaction throughout the stages of the life cycle with the lowest level of satisfaction being at the empty nest or the retirement stage. The study (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979), did not support earlier research. They report on findings from a random sample of 1,056 married members of three-generational families, who were used to develop a two-dimensional measure of marital satisfaction: 'positive interaction and negative sentiment'. These results support a curvilinear trend in terms of the pattern of positive interaction, and a linear decline with regard to progression of negative sentiment. The conclusion is that these results do not support a linear decline in marital satisfaction in the later stage of the life cycle.

Other evidence suggests that couples who perceive their marriage as satisfying in later years have usually been satisfied from the beginning; and likewise, those

who perceive their marriage as unsatisfying were unsatisfied from the beginning (Fried & Stern, 1972). With respect to particular couples, this may not always be the situation. However, opposing evidence suggests that earlier experiences while they may have some influence in determining satisfaction in later years, these experiences do not ensure that the perception of marital satisfaction in later years will not be somewhat independent of (or incongruent with) earlier experiences (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1986).

Stinnett, Carter, and Montgomery (1972) offer further evidence to suggest that marital disenchantment over the life cycle may in fact be a myth. In their study, they found that older couples perceived their marriages as favourable and increasing in later years. Most elderly respondents reported the present to be the happiest period of both marriage and of life in general (Stinnett, Carter, & Montgomery, 1972).

#### ***Lasting Marriages/Marital Strengths***

Schl<sup>e</sup>singer and Tenhouse-Giblon (1984) promote a positive perspective on marriage in the 80's. They believe that staying married is enjoying a renewal in the



1980's; "now that we have entered the 80's, and the 'flower children' are grown up, it appears that there is a new focus in North American family life - on functioning families and lasting marriage" (Schlesinger & Tenhouse-Giblon, 1984, p. 2).

Contrary to popular opinion there is evidence to suggest that long marriages are not unusual (Mudd & Taubin, 1982; Schlesinger & Tenhouse-Giblon 1984). Schlesinger and Tenhouse-Giblon, (1984) refer to *Newsweek* (1984), which points out that in the United States, fifty-eight percent (58%) of all first marriages last more than fifteen years, fifty-two percent (52%) more than twenty years, and forty-seven percent (47%) more than twenty-five years. Also, in the year 1976, two-thirds (64.2%) of Canada's adult population ages fifteen years and older were married. In 1980, 191,069 marriages took place, which was an increase from 187,811, in 1979 (Schlesinger & Tenhouse-Giblon, 1984). Based on the above, marital life in North America, including Canada would appear to support some lasting relationships. A focus on lasting marriages and permanence, as opposed to marital dissolution, provides a rich ground for systematic inquiry.

Gufknecht and West (1985) support the premise that lasting marriages are very prevalent in our society. They explain that the fact that there is a small percentage of couples who marry three or more times adds to a distorted picture of the existence of divorce. They state, "... 44% of divorced individuals who remarry will divorce again, which pushes up the total percent of marriages that will end in divorce in the long term" (Gutknecht & West, 1985, p.181). They also explain that, "two of every three first marriages last a lifetime and about three-fourths of all who divorce remarry" (Gutknecht & West, 1985, p.181). These interpretations also support a research focus on lasting marriages and marital strengths.

Professor Ben Schlesinger and students at the University of Toronto, School of Social Work, defined a lasting marriage as lasting fifteen years or longer and having at least one child (Schlesinger & Tenhouse-Giblon, 1984). The study involved 129 couples who volunteered through an advertisement in a Toronto newspaper. Sixty-two couples were interviewed and sixty-seven couples were mailed questionnaires. The couples identified the following as contributing to a lasting

marriage: the quality of the marriage (respect, love, loyalty, honesty, etc.), couple interaction (comfortable with each other), friendship intimacy and fidelity, emotional aspects (consideration, dependability, emotional support, sharing sadness and joys), honesty in communication, views (commitment to the marriage), individual identity, and problem solving (ability to solve problems, confront and work out problems).

In a twenty-year ongoing study of successful family functioning, Mudd and Tabin (1982) report findings that are fundamental to enduring family life. The study began with 100 families in 1957-1960 and a follow-up questionnaire was completed by 59 families in 1978-1979. The findings suggest that within well-functioning families family dynamics, are egalitarian and democratic, there are often frequent relations or ongoing contact with adult children, important sources of strength are through close friendships and active community involvement, few troubling situations are defined as problems and perceived problems are often resolved within the family, the couples expressed continuing satisfaction with marriage and family, and couples are optimistic about the future and anticipate positives in later

development. The conclusion reached was that planning, altruism, affection, democracy and economic opportunity are important to enduring family life.

Klagsburn (1985) operationalized the lasting marriage as fifteen years or more. The reason is that the majority of marital separations take place earlier and because this population was subjected to the sweeping and vulnerable changes of the 1960's and the 1970's. In her research, she identifies eight categories that are often found in strong marriages, which includes those with; (1) an ability to change and tolerate change; (2) an ability to live with the unchangeable; (3) an assumption of permanence; (4) trust; (5) a balance of power; (6) enjoyment of each other; (7) a shared history that is cherished; and (8) luck in choosing a partner who has the capacity to change, trust and love.

Sporakowski and Hughston (1979) approached lasting marriage by assessing marital satisfaction and marital perception over the life cycle. In their study, they asked couples (married 50 or more years) what they believed to be the most important factors in a happy marriage. The following responses were received: importance of religion; love; give and take - talking

things through; home, family and children; it takes two to make a marriage work; marriage is for life; understanding and patience; and honesty and trust. A significant finding was that the couples reported the aging years as most satisfying as it meant more time together, travel and activities which they did not have time for in previous years.

Beavers (1985) suggests that healthy couples operate on what he interprets as "a systems point of view" (p. 72). Within the systems theoretical perspective, he defines healthy couples as: (1) placing meaning to enterprise and supporting each other's needs, (2) having a modest overt power difference, (3) having the capacity for clear boundaries, (4) operating mainly in the present as opposed to allowing past problems and influences by their families of origin to impact their present situation, (5) having respect for individual choice and autonomy, (6) having skills in negotiating, and (7) sharing positive feelings.

The concept of power, as with other aspects of family dynamics, can be denoted in terms of the individual's or family's perceptions and definitions of the meaning that it has for them. Latham (1986) maintains that the issue

of power balance, " ... depends not only on the views of the members as to what ought to be the balance but on their perception of what actually is the position" (p.128). In other words, in contrast to the therapist's perceptions, the couple may view their relationship as existing with little or no power differential with respect to their positions in the relationship. This interpretation is consistent with the cognitive-humanistic theoretical perspective.

In a study of the vital marriage, Ammons and Stinnett (1980) attempted to identify those personality characteristics that enable couples to develop and maintain a vital relationship. They found the following characteristics to be important; sex, reciprocity, determination, commitment and ego strengths. The findings suggested that sex was an important component of the couple's interpersonal relationship as a means of sustaining intimacy. Reciprocity was important in terms of the couple's expression of understanding and support in the relationship. Expression of needs reinforce positive self concept (Ammons & Stinnett, 1980). They also point out that the couples were committed to the relationship and determined to see it through. They were

capable of doing so because they have, " ... a clear vision of what they want and express personality needs which enable them to realize their aspirations" (Ammons & Stinnett, 1980, p.40). Ego strengths was interpreted as being important in terms of the couples ability to function autonomously and to be separate from their spouse. The paradox seems to be that individualization and the development of autonomy may be encouraged by a satisfying and supportive couple bond. A sense of individuality assists with the development of a positive self concept and the personal contentment necessary for emotional bonding (Cowan & Kinder, 1988).

### ***Marital Strengths***

Central themes throughout the research presented thus far, are the importance of communication, perception, commitment and intimacy in optimal family functioning and in strong, lasting marriages. The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of satisfying and lasting marriages and related family well-being, in terms of communication, perception, commitment and intimacy. In this section, a review of the research that will enable the achievement of clarity

and operationalization of these dimensions as variable sets, is analyzed.

### **Communication and Perception**

Satir (1972) states, "I see communication as a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings" (p. 30) and "...communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he makes with others and what happens to him in the world about him" (p. 30). According to Banmen (1986), Satir focuses on actions, reactions, and interactions, and denotes communication as a "... means by which people measure each other's feeling of self-worth." (Banmen, 1986, p. 483). In other words, communication patterns are perceived in terms of emotional expression, " ...and the meaning of the feelings individuals have as a reaction to the communication" (Banmen, 1986, p.481). This is consistent with the interactional perspective which maintains that meaning derived in interaction varies from individual to individual and from situation to situation (Burr, et al., 1979).

Alexander (1973) distinguishes between supportive and



defensive communication. He denotes defensive communication (Gibb, 1973) as verbal and nonverbal behaviours that are either threatening or punishing and which reciprocally invite and produce defensive behaviours. Supportive communication is genuine, information-seeking and giving, on a level of empathic understanding and equality (Gibb, 1973). Supportive communication elicits productive interactions, lowered anxiety and clearer communications.

Other research indicates that perception and communication are important determinants to the quality of the marriage (Zakerin, 1983; Strucker, 1971; Allen & Thompson, 1984). Strucker (1971) explains that if role concepts are similar (i.e. common expectations and perceptions of responsibilities) communications are effective and the relationship existing between the marriage partners is more satisfactory to both.

Differences in perceptions may cause disagreements, misunderstanding and problems within the marital relationship (Allen & Thompson, 1984). There is empirical support for the hypothesis that, "more direct agreement between partners will lead to more satisfying communication for both partners" (Allen & Thompson, 1984,

p. 917). Direct agreement was conceptualized in terms of their direct perceptions on various aspects or issues in their relationship such as religious belief, household tasks, and finances. The measuring instrument that was used was a questionnaire designed in conjunction with Laing et al.'s (1966) Interpersonal Perception Model. Perception also appears important in the later stages of marriage. In Sporakowski and Hughston's (1978) study of older couples they found that congruence of perception of spouses continued to be of major significance in relation to marital satisfaction.

Consistent with role theory, Biddle (1985) maintains that human behaviour is both predictable and different depending on respective social identities and the situation that exists in a social interaction. Recent development in role research proposes that perceptions in marriage are important to marital satisfaction (Bahr, Chappell & Leigh, 1983; Strucker, 1971; Bochner, Krueger & Chmielewski, 1982). For example, in a study of 126 couples (Bochner, Krueger & Chmielewski, 1982) the results showed a substantial association between perceived role discrepancy and marital adjustment. That is, it was determined that it was not the accuracy per se

but the perception of what one spouse 'believed' the other perceived that 'defined' congruence of perceptions for the couple. In other words, " 'what he thinks she thinks' and 'what she thinks he thinks' about each other's performance of instrumental and companionship roles is more important to marital satisfaction than whether the husband's and wife's perceptions are in fact accurate" (Bochner, Krueger & Chmielewski, 1982, p. 135).

Bahr, Chappell and Leigh (1983) studied the relationship between age at marriage, role enactment, role consensus and marital satisfaction. They denoted the quality of role enactment as "the perceived competence with which role tasks are performed" (Bahr, Chappell & Leigh, 1983, p. 797). Self role enactment refers to the individual's perception of how well he or she will enact a role. Spouse role enactment refers to how well the individual perceives their spouse as enacting a role (Bahr, Chappell, & Leigh, 1983). Role consensus refers to "...the perceived amount of agreement between husband and wife regarding expectations and values in specific roles" (Bahr, Chappell & Leigh, 1983, p. 797). The findings suggest that age at marriage had a weak association with self role enactment, spouse role

enactment, and role consensus; the quality of self role enactment had a small relationship with marital satisfaction; and the quality of spouse role enactment and role consensus had a positive association with marital satisfaction. These findings alert the practitioner to the importance of perception and consensus of perception in marital relationships, as a consideration separate from the congruence of actions with definitions of reality. For example, "quality of role enactment refers to the perceived competence with which role tasks are performed " (Bahr, Chappell & Leigh, 1983, p. 797).

Montgomery (1981) defines quality communication as "the interpersonal, transactional, symbolic process by which marriage partners achieve and maintain understanding of each other" (p. 21). The importance of communication in marriage is not only related to quality but also to perception of quality. Take, for example, those couples who argue constantly and still perceive their marriage as satisfactory. The therapist may define problems in the marriage; however, the fact remains that the couple may not perceive similar problems as existing. If they do they may not perceive the problems as having

a negative impact on how satisfied they actually feel with their relationship. For the clinician the issue is twofold: (1) is there joint ownership of the problem, and (2) is the problem perceived as sufficiently significant to motivate change.

The symbolic process of communication by which partners interpret messages, involves both verbal and non-verbal abstractions of reality (Montgomery, 1981). "Learning what a symbol is, is only one of the processes that occur in the mind; another process is learning to make evaluate distinctions about symbols" (Burr et al., 1979, p. 46). Burr et al. (1979) maintains that if communication is conceived as a cognitive process, it involves a mental process which is learned from interaction with individuals. The mental process involves acquiring symbols, which are mental abstractions such as words or ideas. These symbols acquire meaning through interaction with others. The importance appears to be that meaning is derived not only from apparent symbols such as speech but also through non-verbal behaviour such as silence, gestures, tone of voice and so forth. Satir (1972) reviews the elements of the communication process which includes, the body, values,

*expectations, sense organs, the ability to talk and the brain. The body refers to movement, form and shape. Values are the concepts of 'good' and 'bad' that determines the person's way of living. His/her expectations are determined by expectations of the moment and expectations formulated through past experiences. The sense organs include eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin which enable the person to be aware of the physical and social environment around them. The ability to talk refers to the actual ability to speak (e.g. words and voice). Finally, the brain is considered the storehouse of knowledge and experience that the person brings into the communication process. Good communication is partially personalized to a relationship in that, "...good human relations depend a great deal on people's getting one another's meaning, whatever words they happen to use" (Satir, 1972, p. 47).*

*In terms of couple's communication, there is research to suggest that there is a relationship between marital satisfaction and the accuracy of non-verbal communication (Kahn, 1970). Kahn (1970) administered the Marital Communication Scale (MCS) and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale to forty-two college couples and found*

that the dissatisfied couples were prone to misinterpreting each other's non-verbal signals. The findings indicated that misunderstanding of intentions that are communicated non-verbally is a major aspect of marital disharmony.

The research presented thus far has attempted to outline the importance of communication (especially the process) and perceptions (especially shared meaning) as determinants of marital satisfaction. If communication is considered in terms of Satir's model (Banmen, 1986) then there is a strong association between communication and perception. As previously noted, Satir denotes communication in terms of emotion as expression, "... and the meaning of the feelings individuals have as a reaction to the communication" (Banmen, 1986, p.481). The meaning derived from interaction or communication is determined by individual perceptions and as previously noted, there is a positive association between similar perceptions (role concepts), effective communication and marital satisfaction.

#### **Commitment**

Commitment is defined as, "the extent to which the

partners in a relationship either accept their relationship as continuing indefinitely or direct their behaviour towards ensuring its continuance or optimising its properties" (Hinde, 1984, p. 32). Chelune, et al. (1984) point out that the relationship depends on the extent to which the couples believe in each other's commitment and that misunderstanding in the expression of commitment may stifle the growth of the intimate relationship or initiate its decline. The cognitive-interactional perspective maintains that the couple's understanding of their relationship develops through interpretations and perceptions of meanings that are derived through their interaction. (A more complete analysis of the cognitive-interactional theory is provided in the next section of this report). The difficulty in researching the concept of commitment is the lack of quantification to make the concept more reliably observable (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1983). In terms of a conceptual analysis, Rosenblatt (1977) defines commitment as, "an avowed or inferred intent of a person to maintain a relationship" (p. 74). Rosenblatt (1977) does not define commitment as existing simply because of marriage or because people decide to get married. He



maintains that while the problems may not increase commitment, the staying together while feeling that one could leave is evidence of high commitment. Rosenblatt (1977) also refers to external forces which may also increase commitment to the marriage; such as commitment to children and symbolic commitment through the marriage ceremony.

There is evidence to support that formal marriage appears to imply commitment. Johnson (1983) interviewed married and cohabiting students and found that married students were more committed to and perceived more social pressure to maintain their relationship and marriage than the non-married cohabiting students.

### **Intimacy**

If it is perceived that couples in lasting marriage are committed to the marriage, this does not necessarily imply that intimacy exists. Chelune, Robison and Kommor (1984) states; "Unfortunately, many marriages and friendships can be considered 'close' but not necessarily 'intimate' relationships" (p. 26). According to Mace (1982) intimacy implies shared privacy, closeness and feelings of security and support. Intimacy involves a

high degree of trust, which is built-up over time. Through intimacy a sense of unity develops; however, for growth in the relationship to occur, paradoxically each person must continue to develop to be their own person (Mace, 1982). The Eriksonian concept of intimacy implies, "...intimacy as mutuality, or shared feelings, with a loved person of the opposite sex, with whom the person is capable of co-ordinating the cycles of work, recreation and procreation" (Houle & Kiely, 1984, p.7). Mutuality is conceived as existing when the partners are interdependent for the development of their respective strengths. One primitive task people have to face is learning how to maintain their own integrity and identity while engaging in deep intimate relationships (Hatfield, 1984). The mutual process is such that "both work, share, interact and come to know one another in great depth" (Chelune, et al., 1984, p. 29). It could be argued then that in sound lasting marriages a balance of shared intimacy and individual growth will be achieved.

In terms of a cognitive-interactional perspective, intimacy is defined as "...a subjective appraisal, based upon interactive behaviours, that leads to certain relational expectations" (Chelune, et al., 1984, p. 13).

Segraves (1990) provides evidence to suggest that intimacy is related to the person's subjective sense of well-being and that the presence of intimacy may in fact aid in the ability to withstand life stress. Intimacy is a relationship property, which emerges out of the couples interactions. It involves, (a) knowledge of the innermost being of one another, (b) mutuality, (c) interdependence, (d) trust, (e) commitment, and (f) caring (Chelune, et al., 1984).

In terms of empirical research on intimacy and commitment, Perlman and Fehr (1987) report on a study which asked fifty adults living in a university community "what does intimacy mean to you?" (p. 15). The following four themes of intimacy emerged: as sharing private thoughts, dreams and beliefs; sexuality with an emphasis on affection and commitment; having a stable personal sense of identity; and a definition such that anger, resentment and criticism are not a part of intimacy.

As a last point, a recent study on intimacy in relationship indicated apparent sex differences. Houle and Kiely (1984) found that in early stages of a relationship women were more accessible to their partners

and more open and committed to resolving problems that arise in the relationship. They found men, in the beginnings of their marriages, were less accessible or open to their partners on a more selective basis. After a decade of marriage, men approached their female partners more, in terms of the expression of intimacy. In terms of problems, men were more likely to count on time to sort things out. When conflict does exist in the relationship, men were found to perceive their relationship as more fragile.

Additional evidence suggests that women feel slightly more comfortable with intense intimacy than do men and women are more comfortable in revealing themselves in casual relationship (Hatfield, 1984). The data from Houle and Kiely (1984) qualifies this difference and suggest that congruence may be approached as the marriage relationship develops and as the male ages.

To reiterate, the research indicates that effective communication, congruent perceptions and commitment/intimacy are important correlates of marital satisfaction. In terms of a cognitive-interactional perspective, satisfaction implies the couple's subjective appraisal of their relationship. It is through

interactions that the couples derive meanings and formulate perceptions of their relationship. Whether or not the perceptions and meanings are distorted or whether or not couples actually perceive each other accurately will depend on their interaction. Interaction is important in that a relationship is defined as "a series of interactions between two individuals known to each other .... where the interaction is affected by past interactions or is likely to influence future ones" (Hinde, 1984, p. 12). If the couple perceives problems of interaction in their relationship, then their subjective appraisal of their relationship will be constructed cognitively, and based on their definition of reality. If the couple perceives problems as existing then problems do exist for them regardless of the therapist's definition of reality.

#### A COGNITIVE - INTERACTIONAL THEORY BASE

The theoretical position used in this study as an analytic frame is a cognitive - interactional approach to marital relationships and marital satisfaction. This position is consistent with the interactionalist

perspective which suggests that marital satisfaction is a subjective phenomenon in that the definition of marital satisfaction implies the individual's or couple's subjective evaluation of their marriage and relationship (Burr et al., 1979). The studies presented thus far have encompassed or are interpretable from the cognitive-interactional theory base. The analysis below expands on the cognitive and interactional concepts and their interrelationships.

The cognitive - interactional perspective is embedded in the concepts of the school of symbolic interactionism (Burr et al., 1979) and the cognitive humanistic approach (Goldstien, 1981). Scholars who have contributed to the interactional approach include George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, W. I. Thomas, Robert E. Park, William James, Charles Horton Cooley, Florian Znaniecki, James Mark Baldwin, Robert Redfield, and Louis Wirth (Blumer, 1969).

Blumer (1969) maintains that there are three basic premises to symbolic interactionism. The first premise is that humans act toward things based on the meanings they derive from the things. Things refer to physical objects, humans, institutions, actions - everything in people's world and the situations in daily life. The

second premise is that the meanings are derived out of social interaction that the person has with others. The third premise is that the meanings are handled in and through an interpretative process. The meaning is not derived from psychological or sociological elements but through the process of interaction. For example, psychologists in explaining human conduct, refer to such factors as stimuli, attitudes, conscious or unconscious motives and so on (Blumer, 1969). Sociologists rely on factors such as social position, status, social rules, norms, values, social pressures, group affiliation and cultural prescriptions (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism maintains that "humans live in a symbolic environment as well as a physical environment, and they acquire complex sets of symbols in their minds" (Rose, 1979, p. 46), which are obtained through interacting with others. These symbols and their meanings, are definitions of reality, which, even if they have no roots in reality, impact a person or a couple just as if they were real.

As with other grand theory perspectives, the boundaries of interactionism are difficult to identify. The important concept, however, is interaction. The

cognitive - interactional perspective is concerned with the meaning and understanding that the person derives from and gives to her/his environment and significant others - cognition and interaction operating within the dynamics of the relationship. The meanings carried give direction to a person's observations, judgements, decisions and actions.

Moretti, Feildman and Shaw (1990) maintain that the fundamental assumption of cognitive models is that individuals are processors of active information. They explain the experience that people 'construct' largely determines emotional reactions to events and future behaviours to situations of similar occurrence. Through interactive processes, the development of self-representations (ie., behaviours, feelings and interactions with others), "... is influenced by events in our lives, but once established, these representations begin to interpret new experiences that are self relevant" (Moretti et al., 1990, p.219). This model emphasises that problems occur when individuals develop dysfunctional, distorted internal models of self (Moretti et al., 1990).

The cognitive approach emphasize the importance of



recognizing the limitations of the constructs and the functions of theories (Goldstein, 1981). Goldstein (1981) believes that there is a critical loss in understanding when a human event is so defined that it can fit into the confines of a theoretical model. Human actions are unique to the situation and the individual. How the individual is perceived in terms of theoretical constructs may be quite different from how the individual perceives self. Take for example psychoanalytic theory, which according to Burr et al. (1979) argues that, "...there are a number of phenomena that have universally symbolic meanings." (p.64). In attempts to interpret dreams, extensive efforts have been made to develop psychoanalytic dictionaries. Burr et al. (1979) states, "...an interactionist would argue that this is largely a futile activity, because the meanings of these phenomena vary from individual to individual, from situation to situation, subject to historical time, and between cultures." (p.64).

Goldstein (1981) describes the contrasting views of other theoretical approaches. He maintains that system theory offers an explanation for the behavioural transactions and effect produced within the organic

whole; however, he does not define or account for the 'meanings' that the behaviours hold for the individuals who act them out. Likewise, he asserts that behavioural theory does not place emphasis on the motive behind the needs of the individual or the interpersonal influences that cause the behaviour. Moretti et al. (1990) extends the behavioural concept further. For example, in terms of changing negative cognitions in depression, behaviouralists maintain that effectiveness of interventions is measured in terms of behavioural change and that changes in cognition are secondary to treatment (Moretti et al., 1990). In terms of psychoanalytic theory, he contends that since the concepts such as id, ego, and superego "do not point to demonstrable reference, they must then be considered to be highly abstract inferences or reifications about the dynamics of the impenetrable mind" (Goldstein, 1981, p. 61). Psychodynamic theorists refer to symptoms and treating the symptoms in therapy. Referring to the previous example of negative cognitions of depression, Moretti et al. (1990) maintains that psychodynamic theorists focus intervention on treating the symptom of the disorder and not the cause.

The heuristic conceptual framework of this study of lasting marriages has developed from the cognitive-interactional perspective. From a cognitive-interactionalist premise, marital satisfaction is based on how the couple interprets and perceives their situation and from the meanings that they derive from and construct in their interaction. If the concept of role is denoted in terms of perception, satisfaction is determined by how the couple assigns meaning to the expectations and perceptions in their relationship which are derived out of social interactions and interaction with each other. Biddle (1986) states, "Actual roles, then, are thought to reflect norms, attitudes, contextual demands, negotiation, and the evolving definition of the situation as understood by the actors" (p. 71). In terms of an interactional model, such concepts as satisfaction, expectations, and the overall reaction to the relationship is determined by the interpretation that is derived from the interaction and the symbolic meanings that occur in the process.

An interactionalist would argue that the meaning derived from interaction will vary from individual to individual and from situation to situation (Burr et al.,

1979). People who interact enter into a relationship and begin determining and constructing its nature (Nelsen, 1980). The interpretation and meaning derived from the interaction is unique to that individual as he or she perceives it (Goldstein, 1984). The proposition held in interactional literature is that, "the definition of the situation influences the effects of those situations in such a way that the effect tends to be congruent with the definition" (Burr et al., 1979, p. 64). In other words, individuals or couples situations will be constructed out of the definitions and meanings they give to the situation.

When applied to marriages, Burr et al. (1979) suggests that the concept of satisfaction be used rather than quality. They explain that satisfaction implies a person's subjective evaluation, whereas quality connotes an objectivity term, which implies impersonal criteria. They state, "...we believe that 'satisfaction' is an interpersonal phenomenon, and the definition of satisfaction as a subjective response allows for this distinction" (Burr et al., 1979, p. 68). Overall, "it is the learned meaning, values, sentiments that are attached to things that create the positive or negative responses

to them" (Burr et al., 1979, p. 67). In other words, satisfaction is conceived in terms of the person's subjective evaluation of how they perceive their situation and what it means for that person.

Communication, perception, commitment and intimacy, are important dimensions in terms of how a couple subjectively evaluates and constructs the meanings that may be reduced to the term 'marital satisfaction'. The interactional perspective would frame communication, perception, commitment and or intimacy in terms of the subjective meaning it has for the individual or couple's interaction. The situations as perceived by the individual are real for them and have real consequences, and these perceptions will form the bases for the individual's evaluation of his marriage.

#### **EXPLORATORY/DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

The major purpose of the study is to describe communication, perception and perceptual congruity, commitment and intimacy as experienced by couples in lasting marriages. It is hoped that through identifying and describing areas of strength in terms of the variable sets being studied, that the results will give direction

to assessment and designing treatment plans for couple therapy. Helping couples involves more than just identifying problem areas; it also involves improving and building on existing strengths in relationships. It is anticipated that this study will provide direction toward creating therapeutic guidelines aimed at building strengths in relationships.

The second purpose of this study is to provide new information on lasting marriages. Most studies emphasize problems or pathology in marriages. There is need for more study which focuses on family strengths and lasting marriages. This study may enable helpers to formulate treatment plans for counselling and therapy without relying only on models of pathology.

The basic assumption in this study is summed up by Stinnett (1985) when he stated, "We don't learn how to do anything looking only at how it shouldn't be done. We learn most effectively by examining how to do something correctly by studying a positive model" (p. 72), or as in this study, by examining marital strengths or efficacious marital relationships.

The general questions guiding this study are thus reduced to what are the characteristics of lasting

marriages? What can we learn from lasting marriages regarding marital strengths and family strengths?

#### OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS

##### **The Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) - Communication, Perception & Commitment**

Marital satisfaction was measured using the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) (Snyder, 1979). The MSI is a multidimensional self-report measure of marital satisfaction, which measures marital distress along eleven dimensions of the couples relationship (Snyder, 1979). The MSI can be used as a clinical tool in formulating treatment plans or as a research instrument for providing an, "objective, multivariate criterion of marital functioning" (Snyder, 1981, p. 3). It is also useful for investigating marital functioning across the family life cycle (Snyder, 1981).

The MSI is comprised of eleven scales (nine scales if the couple are childless), which measure the level of marital distress in the relationship. The couple reports their subjective appraisal of their relationship by answering 'true' or 'false' to each of 280 MSI items, which are incorporated into the eleven scales. The

eleven scales include: (1) the conventionalization (CNV) scale, (2) the Global Distress (GDS) Scale, (3) the Affective Communication (AFC) Scale, (4) the Problem-Solving Communication (PSC) Scale, (5) the Time Together (TTO) Scale, (6) the Disagreement About Finances (Fin) Scale, (7) the Sexual Dissatisfaction (Sex) Scale, (8) the Role Orientation (ROR) Scale, (9) the Family History of Distress (FAM) Scale, (10) the Dissatisfaction with Children (DSC) Scale, and (11) the Conflict Over Childrearing (CCR) Scale (Snyder, 1983). It is estimated that it takes approximately 30 minutes to complete the total MSI. Included in the MSI is a validity scale (CNV) and one Global Affective Scale (GDS). All scales except the validity and Role-orientation Scale are scored in the direction of discontent such that high scores indicate high levels of dissatisfaction (Snyder, 1981). In this study, all eleven scales were administered to obtain an overall MSI Profile of marital satisfaction; however, for the purpose of this study, a major emphasis for analysis was placed on the four scales that measured the variable sets being studied. These four scales (AFC, PSC, ROR, and GDS Scales) will be explained first.

Communication was measured and responses described by using the AFC and the PSC scales. Affective



communication denotes the satisfaction with expression of affection and understanding expressed by the spouse (Snyder, 1983). The AFC is grouped into three dimensions: (1) complaints of inadequate affection and caring, (2) lack of empathy and understanding, and (3) failure to self-disclose. Low scores reflect a relationship of open affective expression and feelings of interpersonal closeness. Moderate scores indicate motivations to enhance intimacy and mutual self-disclosure. High scores characterize extensive isolation and negative affect within the relationship (Snyder, 1983).

Problem-solving communication refers to the couple's ability to resolve problems or differences. The PSC scale measures the couples general ineffectiveness at resolving differences. Low scores reflect minimal levels of disharmony and a commitment to resolve differences. Moderate levels indicate that differences are likely to be dealt with poorly and to be translated by the couple into generalized conflict and extended arguments. High elevations reflect that marital tension pervades the relationship and that major crises are precipitated from minor incidents. High elevations also mean

generalization of distress across a broad range of areas such as finances, marital and parental roles (Snyder, 1983).

For this study, perception is denoted in terms of attitudes and preference of perceived roles in the marriage. Perception was measured, in part, using the Role Orientation scale. The ROR scale reflects the couples adoption of traditional versus nontraditional orientation toward marital and parental sex roles (Snyder, 1983). Low scores indicate a high traditional orientation toward marital and parental sex roles. Moderate scores means greater flexibility in sharing of traditional roles such as a husband as head of the household, a woman responsible for childrearing, and so on. High scores reflect the couples increasingly nontraditional view of marital and parental roles. It should be noted that the ROR scale assesses role perceptions and neither assumes nor evaluates role conflict in any direct fashion.

Commitment is denoted as closeness to one's spouse and commitment to the present relationship (Snyder, 1983). The GDS scale was used to operationalize commitment. The GDS scale measures overall dissatis-

faction with the marriage along two dimensions: (1) general unhappiness with the marriage, and (2) uncertain commitment to the present relationship. Low scores on the GDS scale indicates closeness to ones spouse and commitment to the current relationship. Moderate scores reflect general dissatisfaction with the marriage. High scores indicate a long history of marital problems, an inclination toward separation and divorce and strong feelings of anger and alienation.

The Conventionalization (CNV) Scale assesses the couples tendency to distort the appraisal of their marriage in a socially desirable direction (Snyder, 1983). Low scores are associated with marital distress. Moderate scores reflect strong positive feelings within the marriage. High scores indicate a possible naive, uncritical appraisal of the marital relationship. Interestingly, those with high scores may be unable to objectively deal with future marital difficulties (Snyder, 1983).

The Time Together (TTO) Scale assesses the couples dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together and lack of common interest. The scale focuses on four aspects of time spent together in terms

of "... (1) insufficient time together, (2) lack of common interest, (3) desire for spouse to participate more in respondent's own interest, and (4) feelings that spouse does not enjoy time together" (Snyder, 1981, p. 2). Low scores indicate the couple's dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together. Moderate scores reflect a lack of opportunity or desire to spend leisure time together. High scores indicate severe disruption in pleasant interaction and strong feelings of isolation and alienation (Snyder, 1983).

The Disagreement About Finances (FIN) Scale, measures marital discord in the area of management of family finances. Low scores indicate an absence of marital distress in the area of fiscal responsibilities. Responsibilities are likely to be shared by both spouses. Moderate scores reflect an increasing importance of financial matters as an area of marital contention where there are frequent arguments about finances. High scores reflect finances as a major source of marital distress. Financial arguments may be strongly emotional and may extend into concerns including expression of affection and trust (Snyder, 1983).

The Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) Scale assesses

dissatisfaction with the couple's quality and frequency of sexual intercourse and other sexual activity (Snyder, 1981). Low scores indicate an overall positive attitude toward the quality of sexuality in the relationship. Moderate scores indicate that there is an increasing influence of the sexual relationship as a source of marital distress or discontent. Scores indicate dissatisfaction with either the variety or the frequency of sexual activity. High scores indicate a severe disruption in the sexual relationship and a possible need for intervention in this area (Snyder, 1983).

The Family History of Distress (FAM) Scale focuses on the family of origin and unhappiness in childhood and disruption or distress in the couple's parents' marriage and/or extended family (Snyder, 1983; Snyder, 1981). Low scores indicate a family of origin characterized by warmth and harmony. Moderate scores reflect distress in the couple's parents' marriages. High scores indicate a high disruption in the family of origin and respondents in this category are likely to have experienced alienation from parents, siblings or both (Snyder, 1983).

The Dissatisfaction with Children (DSC) Scale measures the couple's dissatisfaction with parental

*responsibilities or disappointment with children. The Scale focuses on four dimensions "(1) description of children as inconsiderate or disrespectful, (2) lack of common interest or activities with children, (3) disappointment with children, and (4) dissatisfaction with demands of childbearing" (Snyder, 1981, p. 2). Low scores reflect a positive relationship with children. Moderate scores indicate dissatisfaction with either the children or with the demands of childrearing. High scores reflect extensive disruption in the parent-child relationship (Snyder, 1983).*

*The Conflict Over Childrearing (CCR) Scale measures the couple's conflict with regard to childrearing practices. Low scores indicate positive interaction between the spouse regarding childrearing tasks including decisions centered around discipline and their children's privileges and responsibilities. Moderate scores indicate marital distress over childrearing and parental rules are likely to receive little support from each other. High scores reflect intensive disagreement /conflict around childrearing (Snyder, 1983).*

### Validity and Reliability

Snyder (1981) conducted an analysis which confirms both internal consistency and stability across time on all eleven scales. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of internal consistency were derived from combined samples of 650 individuals from the general population and 100 persons in marital therapy. Coefficients indicate high internal consistency; (GDS) .97, (AFC) .88, (PSC) .93, (ROR) .89, (CNV) .91, (TTO) .89, (FIN) .86, (SEX) .90, (FAM) .85, (DSC) .80, and (CCR) .84. Coefficients for test-retest reliability were derived from scores on administered test to 37 couples from the general population with intervals between testing averaging six weeks. The coefficients are as follows; (GDS) .92, (AFC) .84, (PSC) .91, and (ROR) .89. The standard error of measurement (SEM) is (GDS) 2.83, (AFC) 4.00, (PSC) 3.00, and (ROR) 3.32 (Snyder, 1981).

The MSI was correlated with three independent criteria of marital distress; the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), the Locke and Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, (short form) and the MSI Global Distress Scale (GDS) (Snyder, 1983). Results indicated that most scales were highly correlated with marital distress across all three

criteria,  $p < .01$ . Additional studies (Snyder, 1981) also indicate the ability of the MSI to discriminate among couples in therapy in relation to a matched control group, and to differentiate between various levels and sources of stress with a sample of couples who were maritally distressed. Analysis indicated a significant difference between the two groups on each of the eleven MSI Scales.

The author has developed a questionnaire for this study, which was applied in conjunction with the M.S.I.

The questionnaire contains 31 items and 82 variables, which are informed by the literature, some items are borrowed or edited (with permission) from other instruments (see Appendix H).

#### PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From a descriptive perspective, it was anticipated that the data generated from the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) and other items would provide useful information regarding the distribution of characteristics of lasting marriages. The first purpose of this study was to describe lasting marriages as associated with the indicators of marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction.



These lasting marriages were compared with normative scores for the MSI. As noted, previous studies have defined a lasting marriage as one that has lasted fifteen or more years. In terms of this study, a long lasting marriage will be defined as 15 to 24.99 years and a very long lasting marriage as 25 or more years. To reiterate, the basic question is, what are the characteristics of lasting marriages? This question is reduced to the following, more specific questions:

**Question I:** The general question addressed in this study is: How are the characteristics of long lasting marriages and very long lasting marriages distributed with special attention to marital satisfaction and family strengths in lasting marriages? Family strengths is measured by the Family Strengths scale (Olsen, Larsen & McCubbin, 1985). Family strengths is a 12-item inventory, which measures family strengths along five factors; love, religion, communication and individuality. The estimates for internal consistency for the total scale is .83 (Olsen, Larsen & McCubbin, 1987). This scale was included in the authors Lasting Marriages Questionnaire (see Appendix H).

In researching the concept of strengths in lasting

*marriages, it is necessary to identify those characteristics that exist within this population. As previously indicated some research supports a curvilinear trend in marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle. It was anticipated that if this study supported this premise then the results would indicate increased marital satisfaction in later stages of marriage. The distribution of characteristics in terms of the MSI profile, demographic characteristics and those characteristics outlined in the author's questionnaire provides information on marital satisfaction within the context of lasting marriages.*

*Question II: What are the characteristics of the perceptions of role expectations for men in contrast to women (variable 209)? What are the characteristics of the perceptions of role expectations of males in long lasting marriages when compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 90)? What are the characteristics of the perceptions or role expectations of females in long lasting marriages when compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 90)?*

**Question III:** What are the characteristics of problem solving communication for men in contrast to women (variable 205)? What are the characteristics of problem solving of males in long lasting marriages when compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 86)? What are the characteristics of problem solving communication of females in long lasting marriages compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 86)?

**Question IV:** What are the characteristics of relationship commitment and global satisfaction for males in contrast to females (variable 203)? What are the characteristics of relationship commitment and global satisfaction of males in long lasting marriages as compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 84)? What are the characteristics of relationship commitment and global satisfaction of females in long lasting marriages as compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 84)?

**Question V:** What are the characteristics of affective communication of males in contrast to females (variable

204)? What are the characteristics of communication for males in long lasting marriages as compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 85)? What are the characteristics of communication of females in long lasting marriages as compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 85)?

In identifying characteristics in lasting marriages it is necessary to denote distinctive differences or similarities with lasting marriages and the general populations. Throughout the analysis of the data, comparisons are provided. In promoting marital and or family strengths it is important to understand those characteristics in lasting marriages which can be applied to the general marital population in efforts to promote longevity and well-being in marriages.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

In this study, lasting marriages were defined in terms of those couples who have been married fifteen or more years. Other studies have also operationalized a lasting marriage as fifteen years or more (Schlesinger &

Tenhouse-Giblon, 1984; Flagsburn, 1985). As previously noted Flagsburn (1985), in a reference analysis explains that the majority of marital splits take place earlier than fifteen years married and this population, within the current context, was also subjected to the most sweeping and vulnerable changes of the 1960's and the 1970's. Based on the assumption of a curvilinear trend of marital satisfaction over the life cycle (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979), it was anticipated that this group would also be at the acceleration stage and presumably increasing in marital satisfaction.

As the nature of this study implies, subjects volunteered to participate (See Appendix F). There is no clear indication as to why the subjects agreed to participate in the study. It is speculated that the subjects participated for the following reasons: (1) the subjects may have identified themselves as having strong marriages, (2) they may have believed that they could assist in the promotion of family well-being and the prevent marital dissolution, and (3) that they were involving themselves in a novel research which would present a new focus; marital strengths as opposed to marital dissolution.

The researcher recognizes the limitations of a self-

selected sample, however, this study is an exploratory-descriptive survey and should be considered as a pilot study, the findings from which will give direction to a more refined instrument and sampling procedure.

A probability sample was considered, however, it was discovered that there is no available sampling frame. Contacts were made with vital statistics (Statistics Canada) and the City of Corner Brook on February 16, 1987. There are no available data sources which identifies the characteristics of couples married fifteen or more years and living in Corner Brook. Initially, the primary focus of this study was the Corner Brook area. However, after initial advertisement of the study, responses came from Corner Brook, North Shore Bay of Islands, South Shore Bay of Islands, Humber Valley and the Stephenville area, which included Stephenville, Kippens, Port Au Port and Bay St. George. There were a total of 106 couples who agreed to participate in the study on lasting marriages. The distribution of cases in terms of areas were as follows; Corner Brook 45 couples, North and South Shore Bay of Islands 4 couples, Humber Valley 11 couples, and 46 couples from the Stephenville area. All areas with the exception of Corner Brook are

rural areas. Using a double envelope system, questionnaires were either mailed or hand delivered to the respondents. There was a total of 67 couples who returned their questionnaires. This is an 63.20% response rate. Based on the voluntary nature of this study a response rate of 60.00% was expected. The sample was recruited in the following manner. In August of 1989, a media advertisement was placed in two newspapers, the Western Star and the Humber Log and the local television visual broadcast network (See Appendix A). In addition, the physicians throughout the area were contacted by mail and requested that they post an advertisement leaflet in their waiting area (See Appendix B and Appendix A). The clergy throughout the area were contacted in a similar manner requesting that they announce the study in their church bulletin (See Appendix B and Appendix A).

For those couples who inquired by either telephone, word of mouth or through the mail, information was provided in a systematic format (See Appendix c).

#### **Exploratory-Descriptive Survey Procedures**

As previously noted, questionnaires were either

*mailed or hand delivered to the respondents who agreed to participate. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire and to return them in the prepaid self-addressed envelopes to the researcher's supervisor at the School of Social Work. A covering letter explaining the purpose of the study and a terms of consent form were included in the survey package (See Appendix E and Appendix F). The respondent's anonymity was protected by utilizing a double envelope system and having the questionnaire package forwarded to the researcher's supervisor. After the researcher's supervisor opened the packages, they were then forwarded to the researcher. A request was made in the covering letter and the terms of consent for the respondents not to place their name or their spouse's name anywhere on the questionnaire or the return prepaid addressed envelopes or blank envelope. The questionnaires were coded (i.e.: .001 [Male], .001 [Female] and so on) for the purpose of matching couples. As implied by the return procedure, the returned questionnaire could not be identified in terms of couple and area.*

*Evidence suggests that questionnaires are more likely to be returned if they are judged to be salient by the*



respondents (Heberlein & Baumgartner, 1978). Due to the voluntary nature and the saliency of the topic in this study, an adequate response rate was expected. As noted, a response rate of 63.20% (n=67 couples) was obtained. To ensure a high response rate, a short letter of appeal (See Appendix D) was mailed to the respondents every three weeks over a nine week period to each respondent.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

The Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) can be scored by hand or the data can be analyzed using the Western Psychological Services (WPS) Test Report Diskette, which is adaptable to the IBM Microcomputer (IBM PC, XT, or AT an compatible) (MSI order pamphlet). In this study the MSI was scored by hand using Scoring Keys for each scale. T-score values for each responded were determined from T-Score Conversion tables (Snyder, 1981). The results are in the form of individual and/or couple profiles and summary scores. (Refer to Appendix L which includes a MSI and description provided by Snyder, 1983). The SPSS statistical analysis was used to obtain couple MSI profiles, demographic data,

correlations, comparisons of male and female scores and group sub-analysis based on other variables represented in the instrument.

In terms of analyzing MSI couple profiles, accumulation of results are based on T-Score derivations. Briefly, "The T-Score represents a linear transformation of raw scores into a standardized distribution with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10." (Snyder, 1981, p. 8). Group profiles (eg., those married 15-24.99 years and 25 years and over) are displayed and correlations, pooled and separated variance estimates, ranks, and mean ranks are examined with respect to the length of marriage, and other variables under study.

Clinical differences are determined with respect the point of view of clinical assessments. The level of marital satisfaction has clinical meaning in terms of marital enhancement and the need for counselling. Snyder (1981) makes reference to the fact that couples with high levels of satisfaction are less likely to show up in clinical populations.

In this study particular reference is made to communication, congruent perceptions, commitment and intimacy. The level of marital satisfaction in the

*sample is determined from an overall profile on the MSI T-Scores. Analysis is also conducted on male and female profiles and the various items in the questionnaire constructed by the researcher. The MSI manual (Snyder, 1981) and the MSI guide to the WPS Test Report (Snyder, 1983) (see Appendix L) provides direction for analyzing results on all scales, which includes the four key variables that will be examined in this study. This involves evaluating and describing the general quality of communication (affective and problem-solving communication), congruent role perceptions and the overall commitment to the marriage and relationship. (For further interpretation of the scale refer to Appendix L).*

*The results and the conclusions reached take into consideration the limited generalizability due to the selection of a nonprobability sample. It is hoped that the descriptive data gathered will give some direction to social work practice in the prevention of dissolution and the promotion of family /marital well-being in marriages or in subsequent marriages. Analysis will include descriptive statistics and nonparametric statistics based on observed results and normative data. Within the context of new knowledge to inform practice, the hope is*

that the results will:

- *balance current information on dysfunctional families and marital dissolution with new information and understanding of lasting marriages, as well as provide an interpretation of factors that may be associated with family strengths*
- *offer new understandings to social work practitioners and other clinicians, who are concerned with promoting family well-being and with preventing marital dissolutions*
- *provide 'pilot data' that will inform the refinement of this study for application to a broader and more representative population.*

## RESULTS

### Couples Demographic Characteristics

A comparison of couples demographic characteristics with provincial standards would have given more confidence in the results. This was not possible as there is no available provincial statistics which would provides demographic characteristics of individuals married fifteen or more years ago.

There were a total of 134 cases ( $n=134$ ), 67 couples. The mean for age at marriage (Variable 3) for the entire population was 22.62 years. The mean age at marriage for males (Variable 1) was 24.01 years. Ages at marriage for males range from 18 years to 46 years. The mean for age at marriage for females was 21.22 years. Age at marriage for females ranged from 18 years to 26 years. The total numbers of individuals who married under 21 years of age, defined as "the young adult marriage" were 6 males,  $n=6$  and 24 females,  $n=24$ . There were 61 males,  $n=61$  and 43 females,  $n=43$ , who were married at age 21 years and older, defined as "the older adult marriage".

The mean for the present age (Variable 4) for the

entire population was 45.99 years. The mean for the present age for males was 47.32 years. Ages range from 37 years to 67 years. The mean for present age for females was 44.65 years. Age for females range from 33 years to 70 years.

The mean for the number of years married (Variable 2) for the entire population was 23.44 years. The mean for the length of marriage for both males and females remain the same. The range in years of marriage was from 15 years to 44 years. The sample was broken down into two groups; those married 15 to 24.99 years defined as long lasting marriages ( 44 couples) and those married 25 years or more defined as very long lasting marriages (23 couples). The years of marriage in terms of frequency and percent is presented in Table 1. As indicated, the majority of couples were married 15-24.99 years with the highest frequency at 15 and 17 years.

In terms of Variable 5 (first marriage), there were three females and three males who reported that this was not their first marriage. With respect to Variable 6, number of times previously married, one female reported that this was her second marriage. The other two females

did not respond to Variable 6. For the males, there were 3 males reported that they were married twice. One male did not respond.

Table 1

# of Years Married			# of Years Married		
Years Married	Frequency	Percent	Years Married	Frequency	Percent
15	8	11.9	25	2	1.0
16	3	4.5	26	1	1.5
17	8	11.9	27	1	1.5
18	5	7.5	28	2	3.0
19	2	3.0	29	1	1.5
20	5	7.5	30	3	4.5
21	3	4.5	31	1	1.5
22	5	7.5	32	2	3.0
23	2	3.0	33	2	3.0
24	3	4.5	35	2	3.0
n=45 couples (married 15-24.99 years)			38	1	1.5
			39	1	1.5
			40	1	1.5
			42	1	1.5
			44	1	1.5
			n=22 couples (married 25 years or more)		

In terms of children from previous marriages (Variable 8, Blend Male; Variable 9, Blend Female), the respondents reported one child from the previous marriage and this was with a male partner. There was one couple who reported a blended family with a child living with

them (Variable 10). The age of this child was 28 years.

In terms of Variable 13, number of new children, there were 3 reported cases where there were no children resulting from the present marriage. The mean for the number of children from the present marriage (Variable 94), was 2.83 children. The mean for the number of children presently living with the couple(s) (Variable 14, number of children with you) was 1.59. There were 24.6% (n=31) who reported no children living with them; 27% (n=34) reported 1 child living with them; 29.4% (n=37) reported 2 children living with them; 14.3% (n=18) reported 3 children living with them; 3.2% (n=4) reported 4 children living with them; .8% (n=1) reported 13 children living with them. There were 8 missing cases.

The range in ages of children living at home were from 0 years to 34 years. The mean for the age of the youngest child living with the couple(s) (Variable 15) was 12.02 years. Ages ranged from 1 year to 6 years. The mean for the age of the oldest child living with the couple(s) (Variable 16) was 13.53 years,  $X=13.53$ . Ages range from 1 year to 8 years. The range in ages of adult children living away from home were from 0 years to 42 years. There were 52.3% (n=69) of the couples who



reported that there were adult children living away (Variable 17).

### **Employment and Income**

#### **Variable 22, Variable 24, and Variable 25**

The majority of males (73.1%, n=49) and the majority of females (65.6%, n=42) reported they were employed outside of the home (variable 22, employment outside of the home).

A breakdown of occupation (variable 24) is presented in Table 2. There were a total of 117 cases, 59 males (88.1%, n=59), and 58 females (86.6%, n=58), who responded. There were 8 missing male cases (11.9%, n=8) and 9 missing female cases (13.4%, n=9). In these situations, the individuals did not answer the question. As illustrated in Table 2, the majority of males (28.4%, n=19) and the majority of females (35.8%, n=24) reported that they were professionally employed, with a higher percentage of females than males reporting that they were professionally employed. There were more females (16.4%, n=11) than males (4.5%, n=3) in clerical positions and more males (20.9%, n=4) than females (7.5%, n=5) who reported that they were in trades. There were more males

(13.4%, n=9) than females ( 1.5%, n=1) reported that they were retired.

**Table 2**  
**Variable 24 Occupation**

Occupation	Male		Female	
	(Frequency)	(Percent)	(Frequency)	(Percent)
Clerical	n=3	4.5%	n=11	16.4%
Professional	n=19	28.4%	n=24	35.8%
Trades	n=14	20.9%	n=5	7.5%
Unskilled	n=0	0.0%	n=1	1.5%
Sales	n=3	4.5%	n=2	3.0%
Housewife	n=0	0.0%	n=6	9.0%
Retired	n=9	13.4%	n=1	1.5%
Unemployed	n=0	0.0%	n=1	1.5%
Other	n=11	16.4%	n=7	10.4%
Missing	n=8	11.9%	n=9	13.4%

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

In terms of income (variable 25), males and females reported different family income. The majority of both females and males reported \$51,000 to \$61,000 per year as family income. Based on this income the sample was

predominantly middle class.

### **Study Question # 1**

#### **Marital Satisfaction and Family Strengths in Lasting and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

The general question addressed in this study is: How are the characteristics of long lasting marriages and very long lasting marriages distributed with special attention to marital satisfaction and family strengths in lasting marriages? The description of specific results below, are related to answering this general question.

#### **Global Family Strengths**

##### **Family Strengths Scale (Variable 201)**

The Family Strengths scale (Olson, Larsen and McCubbin, 1982) acts as a global indicator of couple and family strengths (Variable 201). The results are presented in Table 3.

There were 16 missing observations, which included 8 couples. As indicated in Table 3, the observed difference ( $p=.245$ ) between means, ranks and variance is not statistically significant. The observed difference

between the main groups and the population norms are also not significant. The family strengths of long lasting marriages and very long lasting marriages is comparable.

**Table 3**  
**Variable 201**  
**Family Strengths for Long Lasting and**  
**Very Long Lasting Marriages**

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	44	49.12	(6.24)	30.24	n/a
VLLMC	19	51.45	(3.89)	36.08	n/a
Norms	2,740	46.79	(6.72)	-	n/a

p = .245 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The very long lasting married couples group (X=51.45) had a slightly more positive score than the long lasting married couples (X=49.12). Clinically, there is a slight difference. There is also a slight clinical difference between the population norms and the two groups. However, all groups have positive scores in terms of family strengths.

### **Validity Check**

#### **Conventionalization Scale (CNV) (Variable 202)**

The Conventionalization M.S.I. scale (CNV) acts as a validity check as it measures any tendency of respondents to present their marriage in socially desirable terms (Snyder,1981). The results are presented in Table 4.

The husbands (58.00T) and the wives (56.00T) reported similar responses on the CNV (Validity check). These individual scores fell within a range below the threshold (45.00-60.00T) for responses to be considered socially desirable (Snyder,1981). The scores for both husbands and wives are in the upper end of the moderate range (population norms) and represent persons who are not likely to appear in clinical populations.

The observed difference between means and ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant ( $p=.008$ ). The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 53.00T. A T score of 53.00T is considered a moderate score and is "...frequently observed within the general population and at the upper end of this range (60T), may reflect strong

positive feelings within the marriage. Among persons entering in to marital therapy scores in this range are infrequent..." (Snyder 1981, p. 25).

**Table 4**  
**Variable 202**  
**Conventionalization in Long Lasting Marriages**  
**and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	10.44	(5.57)	28.52*	53.00
VLLMC	22	14.16	(3.84)	41.75*	60.50
Norms	431	7.20	(5.59)	-	51.00

\*p = .008 (Differences between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed means for the very long lasting marriages is consistent with a T score of 60.50T, which is at the threshold between moderate and high satisfaction. Only 20% of the general population are above 60T and are not likely to appear in clinical samples.

Clinically, there is a difference between the two groups. Even though the two groups are high in

satisfaction, the very long lasting married couple group indicates slightly more satisfaction than the long lasting married couples group.

By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples and the population norm are also statistically and clinically significant.

#### **Overall Satisfaction**

##### **Global Distress Scale (GDS) (Variable 203)**

The M.S.I. Global Distress scale (GDS) evaluates the level of distress in a marriage in terms of global contentment or discontentment. The scale measures the overall marital satisfaction of the couple. A low score (below a threshold of 50T) indicates a high level of satisfaction "... closeness to spouse, commitment to present relationship, and absence of pervasive difficulties" (Snyder, 1981, p. 25). The results are presented in Table 5.

The husbands (45.00T) and the wives (46.00T) reported similar responses on the GDS (general marital satisfaction and lack of clinically significant distress). The individual scores fell within a range below the threshold (below 50.00T) for responses that are

likely to include some clinically significant problems (Snyder 1981).

The scores for both husbands and wives are in mid-range of the lower scores (below 50.00T, population norms) and represent persons who are not likely to appear in clinical populations; that is they are not likely to request marriage counselling. The observed difference between means and ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant ( $p=.023$ ). The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 46.50T and 43.50T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are at the lower range of the T score distribution, with the long lasting marriages even lower. These scores can be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be "... closeness with one's spouse, commitment to the present relationship and the general absence of pervasive difficulties" (Snyder 1981,p.25).

There are clinical and statistical significant differences between long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples with respect to marital satisfaction. Although both are high, the very long lasting married couple group has higher levels of



satisfaction. The observed difference between the very long lasting married couples and the population norm are also statistically and clinically significant.

**Table 5**  
**Variable 203**  
**Distress in Long Lasting Marriages**  
**and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

<b>Marriage Length</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>T Score Equivalent</b>
LLMC	43	5.74*	(6.82)	36.80**	46.50
VLLMC	22	2.70*	(2.69)	25.57**	43.50
Norms	431	9.90	(10.46)	-	50.00

\*p=.000 (Difference in variance, two-tailed)

\*\*p=.023 (Differences between ranks, two-tailed)

There is a significant difference between the two groups with respect to variance ( $p=.000$ ), suggesting a wider variation of observed marital difficulty scores within the long lasting marriages.

#### **Affective Relations**

##### **Affective Communication Scale (AFC) (Variable 204)**

The M.S.I. Affective Communication scale (AFC)

evaluates dissatisfaction with respect to the amount of affection and understanding provided by the spouse. The AFC focuses on relationship process as opposed to content (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 6.

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 45.50T and 42.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are at the lower range of the T score distribution. These scores can be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be adequate expression of affection, feelings of interpersonal closeness and experience of understanding (Snyder, 1981).

**Table 6**  
**Variable 204**  
**Affective Communication in**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

<b>Marriage Length</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>T Score Equivalent</b>
LLMC	43	6.43	(4.65)	36.30*	45.50
VLLMC	22	4.36	(3.56)	26.55*	42.00
Norms	431	8.56	(5.68)	-	50.00

\*p = .049 (Differences between ranks, two-tailed)

The husbands (45.00T) and the wives (44.00T) reported similar responses on the AFC (affection, closeness and understanding). Their individual scores fell within a range below the threshold (below 50.00T) for responses that are likely to include some clinically significant problems (Snyder, 1981).

The observed difference in AFC, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant ( $p=.049$ ).

There is also a clinical difference between long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples with respect to affective communication. Although both groups are high, the very long lasting married couples group has higher levels of satisfaction. By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples and the population norm, are also statistically and clinically significant.

#### **Problem Solving Communication**

##### **Problem Solving Communication Scale (PSC) (Variable 205)**

The M.S.I. Problem Solving Communication (PSC) scale evaluates the respondent's ability to work at resolving differences and acts as an indicator of "overt

disharmony" (Snyder, 1981, p. 26). The results are presented in Table 7.

The husbands (45.00T) and the wives (46.00T) reported similar responses on the PSC scale. Their individual scores fell within a range below the threshold (below 50.00T) for responses that are likely to include some clinically significant problems (Snyder, 1981).

The observed difference in PSC, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant ( $p=.022$ ). The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 47.00T and

**Table 7**  
**Variable 205**  
**Problem Solving Communication in**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	10.95	(7.10)	36.84*	47.00
VLLMC	22	7.43	(6.82)	25.50*	43.00
Norms	431	13.79	(9.09)	-	50.50

\*p = .022 (Differences between ranks, two-tailed)

43.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are at the lower range of the T score distribution and could be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be minimum levels of overt disharmony coupled with a efficacy and commitment to resolving differences (Snyder, 1981). Again, with scores in this range, couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations.

Although both groups are high in marital satisfaction, the very long lasting married couples group has slightly higher levels of satisfaction. By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms, are also statistically and clinically significant.

#### **Quality and quantity of Time Together**

##### **Time Together Scale (TTO) (Variable 206)**

The M.S.I. Time Together (TTO) scale evaluates the respondent's feelings regarding the quality and quantity of time spent together (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 8 .

The husbands (45.00T) and the wives (45.00T) reported similar scores on the TTO scale. Their individual scores fell within a range below the threshold

(below 50.00T) for responses that are likely to include some clinically significant problems (Snyder,1981).

The observed difference in TTO scores, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant ( $p=.044$ ).

**Table 8**  
**Variable 206**  
**Quality and Quantity of Time Together in**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

<b>Marriage Length</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>T Score Equivalent</b>
LLMC	43	4.99	(3.97)	36.37*	47.00
VLLMC	22	2.77	(1.93)	26.41*	43.00
Norms	431	6.48	(4.76)	-	50.00

\*p = .044 (Differences between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 47.00T and 43.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are at the lower range of the T score distribution and could be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be general satisfaction with the quality and

quantity of leisure time that the couple has together. Couples in these categories are likely to have several common interests (Snyder, 1981). Again, with scores in this range, these couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations. Although both groups are high in marital satisfaction there is a clinical difference in that the very long lasting married group has slightly higher levels of satisfaction. By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms, are also statistically and clinically significant.

#### **Agreement About Finances**

##### **Disagreement About Finances Scale (FIN)**

##### **(Variable 207)**

The M.S.I. Disagreement About Finances scale evaluates the respondent's perceptions regarding the level of disagreement experienced with respect to handling family finances (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 9.

The husbands (46.00T) and the wives (47.00T) reported similar responses on FIN scale. Their individual scores fell within a range below the threshold

(below 50.00T) for responses that are likely to include some clinically significant problems (Snyder,1981).

**Table 9**  
**Variable 207**  
**Disagreement About Finances in**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	4.38	(3.66)	37.51*	48.00
VLLMC	22	2.00	(2.04)	24.18*	43.50
Norms	431	5.14	(4.73)	-	50.00

\*p = .007 (Differences between ranks, 2-tailed)

The observed difference in FIN scores, between the mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant (p=.007).

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 48.00T and 43.50T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are at the lower range of the T score distribution and could be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be a general absence of marital distress



related to finances and shared responsibilities with respect to finances (Snyder, 1981). Again, with scores in this range, couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations. Although both groups are high in marital satisfaction, there is a clinical difference. The very long lasting married couples group has slightly higher levels of satisfaction. By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms, are also statistically and clinically significant.

### **Sexual Satisfaction**

#### **Sexual Dissatisfaction Scale (SEX) (Variable 208)**

The M.S.I. Sexual Dissatisfaction scale (SEX) evaluates the respondent's levels of satisfaction with sexual expression and activity in their marital relationship (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 10.

The husbands (46.00T) and the wives (45.00T) reported similar responses on the SEX scale. Their individual scores fell within a range below the threshold (below 50.00T) for responses that are likely to include some clinically significant problems (Snyder, 1981).

Table 10  
Variable 208  
Sexual Satisfaction in  
Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	6.90	(5.19)	34.95*	47.00
VLLMC	22	4.95	(3.74)	29.18*	44.00
Norms	431	9.17	(6.52)	-	50.00

\*p=.244 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed difference in SEX scores, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are not statistically significant (p=.244).

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 47.00T and 44.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are at the lower range of the T score distribution and could be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be a positive attitude on the part of respondents with respect to the overall quality of the sexual relationship, including frequency and variety of

sexual activity (Snyder, 1981). Again, these couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations. There is a slight difference between the two groups in that the very long lasting married couples group has a lower score than the long lasting married couples group. This indicates that the very long lasting married couples group are more satisfied with their sexual relationship. By extrapolation, there is also a clinical difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms.

#### **Marital and Parental Roles**

##### **Role Orientation Scale (ROR) (Variable 209)**

The M.S.I. Role Orientation scale (ROR) evaluates the respondent's attitudes toward marital and sex roles within the context of a range from traditional roles to more unconventional marital arrangements. The ROR scores reflects role attitudes as opposed to role behaviours (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 11.

The husbands (55.00T) and the wives (53.00T) reported similar responses on ROR scale. Their individual scores fell within a range below the threshold (45.00-55.00T) for responses that are likely to include

some clinically significant problems (Snyder, 1981).

Table 11

Variable 209  
Sexual Role Attitudes in  
Long lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	17.41	(4.51)	36.16*	55.00
VLLMC	22	15.07	(4.66)	26.82*	51.00
Norms	431	14.57	(5.74)	-	50.00

\* $p=.059$  (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed difference in ROR scores, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are not statistically significant ( $p=.059$ ).

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated score of 55.00T and 51.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are in the moderate scores and could be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be some flexibility in expectations with respect to sharing and non-traditional roles. These couples are not likely to

appear in clinical populations.

Clinically, there is a difference in the two groups. Even though both groups are high in satisfaction, the very long lasting married couples group has a lower T score of 51.00T, which indicates that they are more traditional in their marital and parental sex roles and less flexible in sharing of traditional roles (Snyder, 1981). The long lasting married couple's score of 55.00T is on the borderline of moderate and high scores, indicating that they may have a tendency to have "... an increasingly unconventional view of marital and parental roles." (Snyder, 1981, p.29). Decision making is likely to be shared more fully with roles viewed as having equally priority (Snyder, 1981). By extrapolation, the observed difference between the long lasting married couples group and the population norms, are also clinically significant.

#### **Family History of Distress**

##### **Family History of Distress Scale (FAM)**

##### **(Variable 210)**

The M.S.I. Family History of Distress scale (FAM) evaluates the respondent's perceptions of the quality of

their parent's marital relationships and how this contributes to distress in the couples current relationship (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 12.

The husbands (46.00T) and the wives (48.00T) reported similar responses on the FAM scale. Their individual scores fell within the moderate range (45.00-60.00T) indicating that some of the couples in the sample may experience clinically significant problems related to family of origin experiences based on scores of 45.00T or higher (Snyder, 1981).

Table 12  
Variable 210  
Family History of Distress in  
Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	5.70	(2.61)	37.00*	48.50
VLLMC	22	4.11	(2.17)	25.18*	43.50
Norms	431	6.71	(3.99)	-	50.00

\*p = .017 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed difference in FAM scores, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are statistically significant ( $p=.017$ ).

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 48.50T, which is in the moderate elevations range. These couples are likely to have experienced significant distress in their parents' marriage and disruption in their relationship with at least one parent (Snyder, 1981).

The observed mean for the very long lasting marriages is consistent with a T score of 43.50T, which low score range (below 45.00T) of the T score distribution and could be interpreted as indicating that there is most likely to be few experiences in the family of origin that are damaging to the current relationship (Snyder, 1981). The scores for the very long lasting married couples are sufficiently high to predict that they came from families characterized by warmth and harmony.

Based on these observations, there is a significant clinical and statistical difference between long lasting and very long lasting marriages. By extrapolation, the

observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms, is also statistically and clinically significant.

#### **Satisfaction with Children**

##### **Dissatisfaction with Children Scale (DSC)**

##### **(Variable 211)**

The M.S.I. Dissatisfaction with Children (DSC) scale evaluates the respondent's perceptions of the couple's overall satisfaction with their parent/child relationship. The results are presented in Table 13.

The husbands (47.00T) and the wives (48.00T) reported similar scores on the DSC scale. Their individual scores fell within the lower range (below 50.00T) indicating positive relationships with their children (Snyder, 1981). These couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations.

The observed difference in DSC scores, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are not statistically significant ( $p=.770$ ).



**Table 13**  
**Variable 211**  
**Dissatisfaction with Children in**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

<b>Marriage Length</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>T Score Equivalent</b>
LLMC	43	3.94	(2.71)	33.48	47.50
VLLMC	22	3.54	(2.08)	32.05	45.00
Norms	431	4.82	(3.70)	-	50.00

p = .770 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated T score of 47.50T and 45.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these scores are in the mid-range of lower scores, indicating lack of major dissatisfaction with children, child rearing or relationships with children and may indicate that children contribute to the overall happiness of the marriage (Snyder, 1981).

There is a slight difference in the two groups in that the very long lasting married couples group has a lower score, indicating slightly more satisfaction. This

difference is not overly significant. By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms, is also not statistically or clinically significant.

### Conflict Over Child Rearing

#### Conflict Over Children Rearing Scale (CCR)

(Variable 212)

The M.S.I. Conflict Over Children (CCR) scale evaluates the respondent's perceptions of conflict over child rearing practices (Snyder, 1981). The results are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Variable 212  
Conflict Over Child Rearing in  
Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
LLMC	43	3.09	(2.94)	34.59*	47.50
VLLMC	22	2.07	(1.64)	29.89*	45.00
Norms	431	4.02	(3.77)	-	50.00

\*p = .340 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The husbands (46.60T) and the wives (48.00T) reported similar responses. Both of these scores are in the mid-range of the lower scores which indicates, "... generally positive interaction between spouses regarding their children" (Snyder 1981, p.31). The observed difference in CCR scores, between mean ranks of long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are not statistically significant ( $p=.340$ ).

The observed mean for long lasting marriages is consistent with an estimated score of 47.50T and 45.00T for very long lasting marriages. Both of these are in the mid-range of lower scores, indicating lack of major conflict with child rearing as well as positive interaction between spouses with respect to child rearing (Snyder, 1981). It is not likely that these couples will appear in clinical populations.

There is slight difference in the two groups. Even though both groups have scores below the population norms, the very long lasting married couples group has slightly lower scores indicating slightly more positive relationships with respect to issues around child rearing. This difference is not overly significant.

By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms is clinically significant.

**Curvilinear Trend in Marital Satisfaction**

**Table 15**  
**MSI T-Scores**  
**Long Lasting and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

<b>MSI</b>	<b>Long Lasting Married Couple</b>	<b>Very Long Lasting Married Couple</b>	<b>Population Norms</b>
CNV	53.00	60.50	51.00
GDS	46.50	43.50	50.00
AFC	45.50	43.00	50.50
PSC	47.00	43.00	50.00
TTO	47.00	43.00	50.00
FIN	48.00	43.50	50.00
SEX	47.00	44.00	50.00
ROR	55.00	51.00	50.00
FAM	48.50	43.50	50.00
DSC	47.50	45.00	50.00
CCR	47.50	45.00	50.00

The data may be interpreted as supporting a curvilinear trend in marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle. As presented in Table 15 above, the MSI scores for Long Lasting and Very Long Lasting Marriages indicate that these two groups have higher levels of marital satisfaction than the general population. If we accept data from other research (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Stinnett, Carter, & Montgomery, 1972) which support the notion that the marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle has a curvilinear U-Shaped trend, then the data in this study could be interpreted as indicating that long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples are on the upward trend of a U-Shaped curve.

## **Study Question # 2**

### **Male and Female Differences**

#### **Sex Differences, Perceptions and Expectations of Marriage**

##### **Perceptions and Expectations (Variable 209 and Variable 290)**

What are the characteristics of the perceptions of role expectations for men in contrast to women (variable

209)? What are the characteristics of the perceptions of role expectations of males in long lasting marriages when compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 90)? What are the characteristics of the perceptions or role expectations of females in long lasting marriages when compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 90)?

The perception and expectations in lasting and long lasting marriage were measured by the ROR MSI scale. The data summary is presented in Table 16.

The observed mean for the total sample of males was consistent with an estimated T score of 55.00T and 53.00T for the total sample of females. Clinically, there is a slight difference between the two groups. The males score of 55.00T is slightly higher than the females score of 53.00T. The males score of 55.00T is on the border of the high score range (above 55.00T) indicating that they have greater flexibility in sharing of traditional roles and decision making (Snyder, 1981).

There is a clinical difference between the long lasting married males and the very long lasting married males. The long lasting married males scores (57.00T) fall within the high score range (above 55.00T) as

opposed to the very long lasting married males (52.00T)

Table 16  
Variable 90 and Variable 209  
Role Orientation  
Male and Female Differences  
In Long Lasting and Very Long Lasting Marriages

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
All Males	66	16.64	(5.30)	65.78	55.00
All Females	65	16.72	(5.12)	66.22	53.00
LLMM	44	17.54	(5.17)	36.82	57.00
VLLMM	22	14.82	(5.20)	26.86	52.00
LLMF	43	17.44	(5.19)	35.98	53.00
VLLMF	22	15.32	(4.77)	27.18	50.00
LLMC	43	17.41	(4.51)	36.16	55.00
VLLMC	22	15.07	(4.66)	26.82	51.00
Norms	431	14.57	(5.74)	-	50.00

who scores fall in the moderate range of the MSI (Snyder, 1981). This indicates that the long lasting married males have a more unconventional view of marital and

parental roles, and decision making around roles is more likely to be shared (Snyder, 1981). Based on the difference ranks ( $p=.047$ ), there is a statistical difference between the two groups. The observed mean for long lasting females is consistent with a T score of 53.00T and 50.00T for very long lasting married females. Both of these groups have moderate scores, however, the long lasting married female group has a slightly higher score. There is a slight clinical difference. This indicates that long lasting married females may have a tendency to be more flexible in sharing of traditional roles (Snyder, 1981). With these scores it is unlikely that this group would appear in clinical populations. There is no statistical difference between the two groups in terms of the difference in ranks ( $p=.075$ ). As previously indicated, there is a slight difference between the scores of the long lasting married couples (55.00T) and the very long lasting married couples (51.00T). There is noted clinical difference and no statistical difference in the two groups.

In terms of the comparison with population norms, there is a significant clinical difference between population norms and the scores for long lasting married



males. The long lasting married males scores falls within the high score range (above 55.00T) compared with the population norms which falls within the moderate score range of the ROR scale (Snyder 1981). Based on these scores, it is unlikely that this group of long lasting males would be found in clinical populations. This direction in scores for all groups is consistently higher with the exception of the very long lasting married female group, whose score of 50.00T is consistent with the population norms.

### **Study Question #3**

#### **Male and Female Differences in Problem Solving**

##### **Problem Solving Communication (Variable 86 and Variable 205)**

What are the characteristics of problem solving communication for men in contrast to women (variable 205)? What are the characteristics of problem solving of males in long lasting marriages when compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 86)? What are the characteristics of problem solving communication of females in long lasting marriages compared with females

in very long lasting marriages (variable 86)?

Problem solving communication was measured using the PSC MSI scale. The results are presented in Table 17.

The observed mean for the total sample of males was consistent with an estimated T score of 45.00T and 47.00T for the total sample of females. There is a slight clinical difference in that the males has a lower score of 3.00T, which indicates even lower levels of overt disharmony in their relationship. Both of these groups have scores below the threshold (below 50.00T), which indicates that they are unlikely to appear in clinical populations. There is no statistical difference in the ranks ( $p=.232$ ).

The observed mean for long lasting married males is consistent with an estimated T score of 46.00T and 43.00T for very long lasting married males. Both of these scores are in the lower score range of the PSC scale (below 50T) and with the population norms. The long lasting married males having a slightly higher score supporting an interpretation of a slight clinical differences and no statistical difference between the two groups ( $p=.160$ ).

**Table 17**  
**Variable 86 and Variable 205**  
**Problem Solving**  
**Male and Female Differences**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

<b>Marriage Length</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>T Score Equivalent</b>
All Males	66	8.86	(7.97)	62.08	45.00
All Females	65	10.54	(8.92)	69.98	47.00
LLMM	44	9.75	(8.11)	35.84	46.00
VLLMM	22	7.09	(7.55)	28.82	43.00
LLMF	43	11.95	(9.42)	35.93	48.00
VLLMF	22	7.77	(7.26)	27.27	44.00
LLMC	43	10.95	(7.10)	36.84*	47.00
VLLMC	22	7.43	(6.82)	25.50*	43.00
Norms	431	6.48	(4.76)	-	50.00

\*p=.022 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed mean for long lasting married females is consistent with an estimated T score of 48.00T and 44.00T for very long lasting married females. Both of these scores are in the lower range of the PSC scale (below 50.00T) and with respect to population norms.

There is a slight clinical difference in that the very long lasting married females has a slightly lower score. This indicates that they have slightly lower levels of overt disharmony and even more commitment to resolving differences in their relationship (Snyder, 1981). There is no statistical difference in ranks ( $p=.080$ ).

As previously indicated both couple groups are high in marital satisfaction, with the very long lasting married couples group having slightly higher levels of satisfaction. There is also a statistical difference in the ranks ( $p=.022$ ). By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples group and the population norms, is also statistically and clinically significant.

In terms of the comparison with population norms, there is a significant clinical difference between population norms and the scores for all groups. The T score of 50.00T for the population norms is on the borderline of the low and the moderate score range. All groups have scores which indicate more positive communication than the population norms.

**Study Question # 4**

**Male and Female Differences in Relationship Commitment**

**Relationship Commitment and Global Satisfaction  
(Variable 84 and Variable 203)**

What are the characteristics of relationship commitment and global satisfaction for males in contrast to females (variable 203)? What are the characteristics of relationship commitment and global satisfaction of males in long lasting marriages as compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 84)? What are the characteristics of relationship commitment and global satisfaction of females in long lasting marriages as compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 84)?

Relationship commitment was measured using the GDS MSI scale. This is also a measure of global satisfaction. The data summary is presented in Table 18.

The observed mean for the total sample of males was consistent with an estimated T score of 45.00T and 46.00T for the total sample of females. There is no significant clinical difference in the two groups in terms of the T scores. Both of these scores are on the

Table 18

Variable 84 and Variable 203

Male and Female Differences  
Relationship Commitment and Global Satisfaction  
Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
All Males	66	3.86	(5.73)	61.32	45.00
All females	65	5.52	(7.61)	70.75	46.00
LLMM	44	4.50	(6.60)	35.77	45.00
VLLMM	22	2.59	(3.16)	28.95	44.00
LLMF	43	6.91	(8.79)	36.44**	46.00
VLLMF	22	2.82	(3.26)	26.27**	43.00
LLMC	43	5.74	(6.82)	36.80*	46.50
VLLMC	22	2.70	(2.69)	25.57*	43.50
Norms	431	9.98	(10.46)	-	50.00

\*p=.023 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

\*\*p=.039 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

lower range of the GDS scale (below 50.00T) and with respect to population norms. These scores are associated with closeness, relationship commitment, and the absence

of pervasive difficulties (Snyder, 1981).

As indicated in Table 18 these scores support an interpretation of no statistical ( $p=.151$ ) or clinical differences between the two groups.

The observed mean for long lasting married males is consistent with an estimated T score of 45.00T and 44.00T for very long lasting married males. Both of these scores are in the lower score range of the GDS scale (below 50T) and with the population norms. There is no clinical difference. As with the previous interpretation, these scores are associated with closeness, relationship commitment, and the absence of pervasive difficulties (Snyder, 1981). There is no statistical difference between the two groups ( $p=.167$ ).

The observed mean for long lasting married females is consistent with an estimated T score of 46.00T and 43.00T for very long lasting married females. Both of these scores are in the lower score range of the GDS scale (below 50.00T). There is a slight difference in their scores supporting an interpretation of a statistical ( $p=.039$ ) and clinically significant differences between the two groups.

The lower scores for the very long lasting married

females group suggest slightly more commitment and overall satisfaction than the long lasting married female group. Even though there is a difference in the scores of the two groups, females from both groups were generally quite satisfied with their marriages. While the results for the males was not significant statistically, the T scores and the direction of the differences are similar to the results observed for the females.

As previously indicated there is a slight clinical difference between the couples groups. The very long lasting married couple group has a slightly lower score indicating that the very long lasting married couple group has higher levels of satisfaction. There is also a statistical difference between the two groups ( $p=.023$ ). The observed difference between the very long lasting married couples and the population norms are also statistically and clinically significant.

It was also noted that the scores for the couples group indicated a significant difference with respect to variance ( $p=.000$ ), suggesting a wider variation of observed marital difficulty scores within the long lasting marriages. Even though both groups are high in



marital satisfaction, the long lasting married group is slightly less satisfied and if presented with marital problems they are more likely than the very long lasting married group to show up in clinical populations.

There is a significant clinical difference between population norms and the scores for long lasting married males. The T score of 50.00T for the population norms is on the borderline of the low and the moderate score range. All groups have scores which indicate higher levels of satisfaction than the population norms.

#### **Study Question # 5**

##### **Male and Female Differences in Affective Communication**

###### **Marital Communication (Variable 85 and Variable 204)**

What are the characteristics of communication of males in contrast to females (variable 204)? What are the characteristics of communication for males in long lasting marriages as compared with males in very long lasting marriages (variable 85)? What are the characteristics of communication of females in long lasting marriages as compared with females in very long lasting marriages (variable 85)?

Marital communication was measured using the AFC scale. The data summary is presented in Table 19.

**Table 19**  
**Variable 85 and Variable 204**  
**Male and Female Differences**  
**Marital Communication**  
**Long Lasting Marriages and Very Long Lasting Marriages**

Marriage Length	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Rank	T Score Equivalent
All Males	66	5.09	(4.74)	61.14	45.00
All Females	65	6.34	(5.46)	70.19	44.00
LLMM	44	5.57	(4.94)	35.73	47.00
VLLMM	22	4.14	(4.27)	29.05	43.00
LLMF	43	7.23	(5.95)	35.93	46.00
VLLMF	22	4.59	(3.88)	27.27	43.00
LLMC	43	6.43	(4.65)	36.30*	45.50
VLLMC	22	4.36	(3.56)	26.55*	42.00
Norms	431	8.56	(5.68)	-	50.00

\*p=.049 (Difference between ranks, two-tailed)

The observed mean for the total sample of males was consistent with an estimated T score of 45.00T and 44.00T for the total sample of females. There is no

significant clinical difference in the two groups in terms of the T scores. Both of these scores are on the lower range of the GDS scale (below 50.00T) and with respect to population norms. These scores reflect positive communication characterized by open expression of affective communication and interpersonal closeness (Snyder, 1981).

The scores support an interpretation of no statistical ( $p=.137$ ) or clinical differences between the two groups.

The observed mean for long lasting married males is consistent with an estimated T score of 47.00T and 43.00T for very long lasting married males. Both of these scores are in the lower score range of the AFC scale (below 50T) and with the population norms.

There is a slight clinical difference in the two groups in that the very long lasting married male group has a slightly lower score indicating slightly more open expression of interpersonal closeness (Snyder 1981). The clinical difference in the two groups is not overly significant in that both scores are in the same range. There is no statistical difference between the two groups ( $p=.180$ ).

The observed mean for long lasting married females is consistent with an estimated T score of 46.00T and 43.00T for very long lasting married females. Both of these scores are in the lower score range of the AFC scale (below 50.00T). There is a slight clinically significant difference between the two groups, with the very long lasting married females having a slightly lower score indicating even more positive communication. As with the males, even though there is a clinical difference, both groups of females have scores which indicate positive marital communication. There is no statistical difference between the two groups ( $p=.080$ ).

As previously noted there is a statistical and clinical difference between long lasting married couples and very long lasting married couples with respect to affective communication. Although both groups have high scores, the very long lasting married couples group has higher levels of satisfaction indicated by slightly more positive scores ( $T=42.00$ ). It should be noted, however, that scores for both groups indicate positive expressions of affective communication. By extrapolation, the observed difference between the very long lasting married couples and the population norm, is also statistically

and clinically significant.

There is a significant clinical difference between population norms and the scores for long lasting married males. The T score of 50.00T for the population norms is on the borderline of the low and the moderate score range. All groups have scores which are lower and indicating more positive expression of affective communication than the population norms.

**Religion (Variable 19, Variable 20, and Variable 21)**

The breakdown of religion affiliation is presented in Table 20 below. There were a total of two missing observations, one male (1.5%, n=1) and one female (1.5%, n=1). As indicated, the majority of males and females were of the Roman Catholic denomination.

Three males (4.5%, n=3) and nine females (13.4%, n=9) reported that they had changed their religion at the time of marriage. The total number of males and females who changed their religion at marriage is not known as there were 34 missing observations (31.3% of the males, n=21 and 19.4% of the females, n=13).

**Table 20**  
**Variable 19**  
**Breakdown of Religion**

Religion	Male	Female
Roman Catholic	47.8%(n=30)	47.8%(n=32)
Anglican	26.9%(n=18)	23.9%(n=16)
United	17.9%(n=12)	16.9%(n=11)
Salvation Army	4.5%(n=3)	1.5%(n=1)
Pentecostal	3.0%(n=2)	3.0%(n=2)
Other	1.5%(n=1)	6.0%(n=4)

n=66 for males; n=66 for females

The breakdown in terms of level of religion for those who changed their religion and those who did not change their religion at time of marriage is presented in Table 21. There were 34 missing observations (n=34, 50.7%). As indicated, the majority of those who changed their religion did not describe themselves as very or moderately religious. Similar results were presented for those who did not change their religion at time of marriage. Overall, the majority of the population described themselves as religious (55.3%, n=37).

Table 21  
Variable 20 and Variable 21  
Change Religion at Marriage by Level of Religiousness

Change Religion	Very Religious	Moderately Religious	Religious	Moderately Not Religious	Not Religious
Yes	1.5%(n=1)	-	9.0%(n=6)	4.5%(n=3)	3.0%(n=2)
No	20.9%(n=13)	3.3%(n=20)	46.3%(n=31)	17.9%(n=12)	16.4%(n=11)

n=12 for yes; n=88 for no.

**Pregnant Before Marriage and Children Before Marriage**  
**Variable 26 and Variable 27**

There were 29.9% (n=20) of the women who reported that they were pregnant before marriage (variable 26). Another nine percent (9.0%, n=6) reported that they had children prior to marriage (variable 27).

The mean number of children before marriage was 1.10 children,  $x=1.10$ . This finding represented too small a sub-sample to make any correlations.

An analysis was conducted on female Family Strengths and MSI scores for females pregnant before marriage and on male Family Strengths and MSI scores for those males who were married to the females who were pregnant before marriage. The results are presented in Table 22.

Table 22  
Pregnant Before Marriage (Variable 26)

Scale	Female		Male	
	(mean)	(t Score)	(mean)	(t Score)
FS	49.75	N/A	49.95	N/A
CNV	11.00	56.00	12.56	56.74
GDS	6.00	46.00	4.26	45.24
AFC	7.00	46.00	5.30	45.52
PSC	11.00	47.00	9.90	45.85
TTO	4.00	45.00	4.56	46.33
FIN	4.00	48.00	3.06	45.40
SEX	4.00	43.00	5.00	42.75
ROR	16.00	51.00	14.66	51.24
FAM	5.00	45.00	6.20	49.23
DSC	4.00	48.00	4.36	48.36
CCR	4.00	48.00	3.16	49.34

n=20 for females; n=20 for males

Both scores for males and females in lasting marriages indicate high marital satisfaction with the exception of the score on the MSI FAM scale for males and females.



The male FAM score of 49.23T is significantly higher than the females indicating increased likelihood of disruption in their relationship with at least one parent. This score also indicates the likelihood of distress in their parents' marriage (Snyder, 1982).

The female FAM score of 45.00T is on the borderline of low and moderate scores. Even though there is less likelihood of distress than with the males, the females scores are on the borderline, indicating a likelihood that distress is possible or may occur.

#### **Perceptions of Marital Satisfaction**

##### **Satisfaction With Present Marriage (Variable 29) and Satisfaction With Present Relationship (Variable 30)**

Reported satisfaction for males and females in lasting and very long lasting marriages are presented in Table 23.

Statistically, the majority of males and females from all groups reported that they were very satisfied with their marriages. There were some slight differences

Table 23  
Variable 29  
Satisfaction With Present Marriage

Marital Length	Very Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	Mod. Not Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Entire Male	64.2%(n=43)	13.4%(n=9)	7.5%(n=5)	6.0%(n=4)	7.5%(n=5)
LLMH	59.1%(n=26)	11.4%(n=5)	11.4%(n=5)	9.1%(n=4)	9.1%(n=4)
VLLMH	73.9%(n=17)	17.4%(n=4)	0.0%(n=0)	0.0%(n=0)	4.3%(n=1)
Entire Female	61.2%(n=41)	17.9%(n=12)	6.0%(n=4)	9.0%(n=6)	4.5%(n=3)
LLMF	50.0%(n=22)	22.7%(n=10)	9.1%(n=4)	11.4%(n=5)	4.5%(n=2)
VLLMF	82.6%(n=19)	8.7%(n=2)	0.0%(n=0)	4.3%(n=1)	4.3%(n=1)

n=66 for entire population of males; n=44 for LLMH; n=22 for the VLLMH  
n=66 for entire population of females; n=43 for LLMF; n=23 for VLLMF

in the observations; however these differences were not statistically or clinically significant. The total population of both males and females reported similar answers or did not answer variable 30, satisfied with present relationship. A possible interpretation is that they did not differentiate between the concepts of marriage and relationship.

#### Satisfaction With Increasing Years Married (Variable 31)

Study results for marital satisfaction with increasing years married is presented in Table 24.

As indicated, the majority of males and females reported

that their marital satisfaction was increasing with years married. There was a slight difference in that a slightly higher proportion of the female population (82.1%, n=55) than the males (76.1%, n=51) reported that satisfaction was increasing with years married. Based on the research which supports the notion of a curvilinear U-Shaped trend in marital satisfaction over the life cycle (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Stinnett, Carter, & Montgomery, 1972), it is assumed that prior to 15 years married, both males and females in this sample experienced perceptions of lower marital satisfaction.

**Table 24**  
**Variable 31**  
**Satisfaction With Increasing Years Married**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Increasing</b>	<b>Decreasing</b>	<b>Remaining</b>	<b>Other</b>
Male	76.1%(n=51)	1.5%(n=1)	20.9%(n=14)	1.5%(n=1)
Female	82.1%(n=55)	1.5%(n=1)	16.4%(n=11)	0.0%(n=1)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

**Years of Reported Highest Marital Satisfaction  
(Variable 32)**

There were a total of 4 missing observations (n=4, 6.0%) with this variable. In terms of the male population, the years of reported highest marital satisfaction for the long lasting married males was 11 years to 15 years, which was 29.5% (n=13) of the males, who were in long lasting marriages. For the very long lasting married males, the years of reported highest marital satisfaction were 26 years and more, which was 65.2% (n=15) of the males who were in very long lasting marriages.

There were similar reported scores with the female population. The long lasting married females reported 11 years to 15 years (34.0%, n=15) as the years of reported highest marital satisfaction. The very long lasting married females reported 26 years and more (56.5%, n=13) as the years of reported highest marital satisfaction.

**Power and Conflict**

**Frequency Disagreements Settled (Variable 33)**

The results for the couples' frequency disagreements settled (Variable 33) is presented in Table 25.

As indicated in Table 25, the majority of males (81.1%, n=59) and the majority of females (85.1%, n=57) reported that they settled disagreements most of the time.

Table 25  
Variable 33  
Frequency Disagreements Settled

Sex	Most of Time	Often	Seldom	Never	N/A
Male	86.1%(n=59)	7.5%(n=5)	3.0%(n=2)	0.0%(n=0)	1.5%(n=1)
Female	85.1%(n=5)	10.4%(n=7)	1.5%(n=1)	1.5%(n=1)	1.5%(n=1)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

In terms of paired couple analysis, the majority of congruent perceptions were with those couples where both partners reported that they usually settled disagreements most of the time, which was 77.6%, n=52. The other couples whose perceptions were congruent were those couples who reported that they often settled disagreements (1.5%, n=1) and those couples who reported that they had no arguments (1.5%, n=1). In terms of incongruent perceptions, 20.5% (n=13) of the couples reported perceptions that were incongruent.

**Time to Settle Disagreements (Variable 34)**

The percentage and number of males and females who reported on the time it took to settle disagreements in their marriage is presented in Table 26. There were no missing observations. As indicated, the majority of males (95.5%, n=64) and females (89.9%, n=60) reported that they settled disagreements within 48 hours. There was a higher percentage of males than females who settled disagreements within 48 hours.

**Table 26**  
**Variable 34**  
**Time To Settle Disagreements**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Within 48 hrs</b>	<b>Under One Week</b>	<b>Over One Week</b>	<b>N/A - No Arguments</b>
Male	95.5%(n=64)	4.5%(n=3)	0.0%(n=0)	0.0%(n=0)
Female	89.9%(n=60)	7.5%(n=5)	1.5%(n=1)	1.5%(n=1)

n=67 for males: n=67 for females

The analysis of paired couples cross-tabulations, indicated that the majority of congruent perceptions were with the couples who reported that they usually settle disagreements within 48 hours, 86% (n=58). The other

congruent perceptions were with the couples where both partners reported that they usually settle disagreements under one week, 1.5% (n=1). In terms of incongruent perceptions, 12.0% (n=8) of the paired couples reported incongruent perceptions of the amount of time it usually took for them to settle disagreements.

**Frequently Avoid Disagreements (Variable 35)**

The percentage and number of males and females who reported on the frequency of how often they avoided disagreements is presented in Table 27.

**Table 27**  
**Variable 35**  
**Frequency Disagreements Avoided**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
Male	70.1%(n=47)	16.4%(n=11)	7.5%(n=5)	6.0%(n=4)
Female	52.2%(n=35)	22.4%(n=15)	20.9%(n=14)	4.5%(n=3)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

There were no missing observations. As indicated, the majority of males (70.1%, n=47) and females (52.2%,

n=35) reported that they avoided disagreements most of the time. These results also indicate that a larger number of males than females avoided disagreements most of the time. The analysis of paired couples cross-tabulations, indicates that 49.3% (n=34) reported congruent perceptions. The results for the congruent perceptions were as follows; 41.8% (n=28) of the paired couples reported that they avoided disagreements most of the time, 4.5% (n=3) reported that they avoided disagreements often, and 3.0% (n=2) reported that they seldom avoided disagreements. The remaining paired couples reported incongruent perceptions which were 50.9% (n=35) of the partners.

#### **Accommodations of Disagreements (Variable 36)**

The percentage and number of males and females who reported on accommodations of disagreements in their marriage is presented in Table 28.

There were no missing observations. As indicated, the majority of males (77.6%, n=52) and the majority of females (67.2, n=45) reported that they accommodated equally; with a higher number of males than females reporting that they accommodated equally. There were



more females (25.4%, n=17) than males (16.4%, n=11) who reported that they accommodated more than their spouse.

**Table 28**  
**Variable 36**  
**Accommodation of Disagreements**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>You Accommodate</b>	<b>Spouse Accommodate</b>	<b>Equally Accommodates</b>
Male	16.4%(n=11)	6.0%(n=4)	77.6%(n=52)
Female	25.4%(n=17)	7.5%(n=5)	67.2%(n=45)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

Paired couples cross-tabulation analysis indicates that the largest congruent paired perceptions were with those partners who reported that they accommodated equally when settling disagreements. This result was 56.7% (n=38). The other congruent perceptions with paired couples were those who reported that they accommodated most often, 7.5% (n=5). The reported results for incongruent perceptions of accommodation in settling disagreements was 35.9% (n=24).

**Decisions Shared (Variable 37)**

The percentage and number of males and females who reported on whether or not important decisions were shared in their marriage is presented in Table 29.

There were no missing observations. As indicated, a significant majority of both males and females reported that important decisions were shared in their marriage. The results were the same for both males (95.5%, n=64) and females (95.5%, n=64).

**Table 29**  
**Variable 37**  
**Important Decisions Shared**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>
Male	95.5%(n=64)	1.5%(n=1)	3.0%(n=2)
Female	95.5%(n=64)	0.0%(n=1)	4.5%(n=3)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

Paired couples cross-tabulation analysis indicates that the majority of the partners reported congruent perceptions. The paired couples reported that 92.5% (n=62) shared important decisions in their marriage and

1.5% (n=1) reported that they sometimes shared important decisions. The remaining paired couples reported incongruent perceptions, 6.0% (n=4).

**Who Makes Decisions (Variable 38)**

Only those respondents who indicated that important decisions were not shared in their marriage were requested to answer this question (see appendix H, question 23). There was a total of 6 respondents, 3 males (4.5%, n=3) and 3 females (4.5%, n=3), which was one hundred percent (100%, n=6) response rate for this particular question. With the male population, 3.0% (n=2) of the males reported that they were the one(s) who made most of the decisions in their marriage and 1.5% (n=1) reported that their spouse was the one who made most of the decisions in their marriage. In the female population, 3.0% (n=2) of the females reported that they were the one(s) who made most of the decisions and 1.5% (n=1) reported that their spouse was the one who made most of the decisions in their marriage.

**Dominant Person (Decisions) (Variable 39)**

The percentage and number of males and females who

reported on the question of who was dominant in their marriage with regards to decision making is presented in Table 30. There were no missing observations. As indicated, the majority of males (67.7%, n=42) and females (55.2%, n=37) reported that, "at times each other" was more dominant in the relationship. There were a slightly higher number of males than females who reported that they were more dominant in the relationship. There was a difference in males and females in that there were more females than males who reported that the female spouse was more dominant with respect to decision making.

**Table 30**  
**Variable 39**  
**Dominant Person (Decision)**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Male Spouse</b>	<b>Female Spouse</b>	<b>At Times Each Other</b>
Male	28.4%(n=19)	9.0%(n=6)	62.7%(n=42)
Female	25.4%(n=17)	19.4%(n=13)	55.2%(n=37)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

Paired couples cross-tabulation analysis indicate

that the majority of partners reported congruent perceptions. The paired couples reported that 41.8% (n=28) perceived each other as being more dominant at times, 6.0% (n=4) perceived the female as being more dominant, and 16.4% (n=11) perceived the male as being more dominant in making decisions in the relationship. In terms of incongruent perceptions, there was 35.8% (n=24) of the couples whose perceptions were incongruent.

**Dominant Person (Perceptions) (Variable 40)**

Variable 40 focuses on the perception of dominance in the relationship as it relates specifically to power. The results for the males and females in terms of percentage and number is presented in Table 31.

**Table 31**  
**Variable 40**  
**Dominant Person (Perceptions)**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Male Spouse</b>	<b>Female Spouse</b>	<b>Equally Shared</b>	<b>Both With Power</b>
Male	16.4%(n=11)	0.0%(n=0)	44.8%(n=30)	38.8%(n=26)
Female	10.4%(n=7)	1.5%(n=1)	49.3%(n=33)	38.8%(n=26)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

There were no missing observations. The majority of males (44.8%, n=30) and females (49.3%, n=33) perceived the husband and wife as having equally shared power. There were more males (16.4%, n=11) than females (10.4%, n=33) who perceived the male spouse as more dominant in the marriage.

**Infidelity and Impact of Infidelity (Variable 65 and Variable 66)**

Variable 65 focuses on infidelity in lasting marriages. There were 5 missing observations. There were 10 couples (14.93 %) where infidelity was reported to have occurred in the marriage.

There were 10 males and 5 females who responded to the question of the impact of infidelity (variable 66). The results are presented in Table 32.

As indicated in Table 32, the females reported that there was either no impact, negative impact, or their spouse did not know. The only difference with the males was that a significant number of the males reported some positive impact on their marriage.

**Table 32**  
**Variable 66**  
**Impact of Infidelity**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Some Positive Impact</b>	<b>Negative Impact</b>	<b>N/A-Spouse Not Know</b>
Male	3.0%(n=2)	4.5%(n=3)	6.0%(n=4)	1.5%(n=1)
Female	1.5%(n=1)	0.0%(n=0)	3.0%(n=2)	3.0%(n=2)

n=10 for males; n=5 for females

In terms of the impact of infidelity, the results of their subjective perceptions of marital satisfaction (variable 29) and relationship satisfaction (variable 30) is presented in Table 33. The results are presented in the form of a Likert Scale where 1 is very satisfied and 5 is not satisfied. As indicated in the Table 33, the results indicate that the majority of males and females did not report high levels of satisfaction. Of the 10 couples, there were only 3 couples (#5, #8, #10) who reported significantly high levels of marital and relationship satisfaction.

Table 33

Marital Satisfaction (Variable 29) and Relationship Satisfaction (Variable 30) Where Infidelity Occurred

Couple	Marital Satisfaction			Relationship Satisfaction		
	Male	Female	Couple	Male	Female	Couple
#1	3	2	2.5	3	2	2.5
#2	1	2	1.0	1	3	2.0
#3	1	1	1.0	1	2	1.5
#4	4	-	n/a	3	-	n/a
#5	5	4	4.5	5	4	4.5
#6	2	4	3.0	2	4	3.0
#7	1	1	1.0	1	1	1.0
#8	4	4	4.0	4	3	3.5
#9	1	2	1.5	1	2	1.5
#10	3	4	3.5	5	4	4.5

n=10 for males; n=9 for females

Due to such a small number of individuals who responded that infidelity occurred in their marriage, there is limited generalizability. It is anticipated, however, that if a larger sample were studied, then the proportion of the sample where infidelity occurred would



be similar to this study. Infidelity did appear to have a negative impact on a lasting marriage with the exception of a significant number of males, who reported some positive impact (see Table 32). In general, these couples were not highly satisfied with the marriages.

The concept of infidelity in lasting marriages is an area in need of further research. It would be of great clinical value to therapists to determine the factors which contributes to longevity in marriages after infidelity occurs.

#### **Physical Abuse (Variable 67)**

There were 2 couples where physical abuse was reported to have occurred in the marriage. The occurrence of abuse was reported by the females. The males did not report any physical abuse occurring. A Likert Scale where 1 is very satisfied and 5 is not satisfied, was used to operationalize marital and relationship satisfaction. With the first couple, both the male and the female reported 3 for marital satisfaction and 3 for relationship satisfaction. With the second couple; the male reported 4 for marital satisfaction and 4 for relationship satisfaction; the

female reported 4 for marital satisfaction and 4 for relationship satisfaction.

Due to such a small number of individuals who responded it is not possible to generalize or draw any conclusions.

#### **Solving Problems in Their Families (Variable 81)**

The results of the responses to variable 81, Solved Problems, is presented in Table 34.

**Table 34**  
**Variable 81**  
**Solved Problems**

<b>Solved Problems</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Solved Within Family	90.1%(n=61)	76.1%(n=51)
Help From Friends	0.0%(n=0)	3.0%(n=2)
Help From Clergy	0.0%(n=0)	4.5%(n=3)
Help From Counsellor	0.0%(n=0)	0.0%(n=0)
Help From Physician	0.0%(n=0)	0.0%(n=0)
Problems Not Solved	3.0%(n=3)	0.0%(n=0)

n=63 for males; n=56 for females

There were 63 males (94.0%, n=63) and 56 (83.6%, n=56) responded to the question of how they solved problems in their family. There was a total of 3 (4.5%, n=3) missing male observations and 11 (16.4%, n=11) missing female observations. In terms of the males, 61 males (91.0%, n=61) responded that they solved problems within their own family and 2 males responded that they did not solve their problems when they occurred. The results for the females were as follows, 51 females (76.1%, n=51) reported that they solved problems within their own family, 2 females (2.9%, n=2) reported that they received help from friends, and 3 females (4.5%, n=3) reported that they received counsel from clergy.

The fact that most of the respondents solved problems within their own family and did not seek counsel from a professional counsellor supports the notion that this is not a clinical sample.

#### **Past Problem Impact (Variable 82)**

The results of the responses to variable 82, Past Problem Impact is presented in Table 35.

**Table 35**  
**Variable 82**  
**Past Problem Impact**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>High Impact</b>	<b>Moderately High Impact</b>	<b>Little Impact</b>	<b>No Impact</b>
Male	3.0%(n=2)	1.5%(n=1)	49.2%(n=33)	44.8%(n=30)
Female	1.5%(n=1)	3.0%(n=2)	53.7%(n=36)	38.8%(n=26)

n=66 for males; n=65 for females

As indicated in table 35, the majority of both males and females reported that there past problems had no impact or little impact on their present relationship with their spouse. More males (44.8%, n=30) than females (38.8%, n=26) reported that their was no impact.

**Comparison With the Characteristics of Lasting Marriages**  
**Identified in the Research**

Variables 41 to variables 63 were those variables that were identified in the research as contributing to a lasting marriage. Using a Likert scale with 1 being not important and 5 being extremely important, the

respondents were asked to rank these variables. The results are presented in Table 36.

Table 36  
Characteristics of Lasting Marriages  
Variable 41 to Variable 63

Variable 41 to Variable 63	Sex	Not Important 1	Moderately Important 2	Important 3	Very Important 4	Extremely Important 5
Open Communication	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 1.54(n=1)	1.54(n=1) 1.54(n=1)	14.94(n=20) 6.14(n=4)	25.44(n=17) 24.24(n=16)	56.74(n=38) 66.74(n=44)	
Shared Time Together	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 1.54(n=1)	6.04(n=4) 3.04(n=2)	23.94(n=16) 27.34(n=18)	25.44(n=17) 28.84(n=19)	43.24(n=29) 39.44(n=26)	
*Trust	(M) 0.04(n=0) (F) 1.54(n=1)	1.54(n=1) 1.54(n=1)	1.54(n=1) 1.54(n=1)	13.44(n=9) 7.64(n=5)	83.64(n=56) 87.94(n=58)	
Similar Values	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 0.04(n=0)	6.04(n=4) 3.04(n=2)	38.84(n=26) 31.84(n=21)	29.94(n=20) 31.84(n=21)	23.94(n=16) 23.34(n=22)	
*Respect	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 0.04(n=0)	0.04(n=0) 0.04(n=0)	3.04(n=2) 3.04(n=2)	28.44(n=19) 18.24(n=12)	67.24(n=45) 78.84(n=52)	
Agreement in Childraising	(M) 0.04(n=0) (F) 0.04(n=0)	7.64(n=5) 3.04(n=2)	13.64(n=9) 18.24(n=12)	39.44(n=26) 31.84(n=21)	39.44(n=26) 47.04(n=31)	
Flexibility for Change	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 0.04(n=0)	6.04(n=4) 4.64(n=3)	25.44(n=17) 35.44(n=23)	47.84(n=32) 35.44(n=23)	19.44(n=13) 24.64(n=16)	
Understanding	(M) 0.04(n=0) (F) 0.04(n=0)	0.04(n=0) 1.54(n=1)	16.44(n=11) 13.64(n=9)	32.84(n=22) 42.44(n=28)	50.74(n=34) 42.44(n=28)	
Religion	(M) 13.44(n=9) (F) 16.74(n=11)	22.44(n=15) 12.14(n=8)	35.84(n=24) 25.84(n=17)	7.54(n=5) 28.84(n=19)	20.94(n=14) 16.74(n=11)	
*Honesty	(M) 0.04(n=0) (F) 0.04(n=0)	0.04(n=0) 0.04(n=0)	4.54(n=3) 4.54(n=3)	25.44(n=17) 9.14(n=6)	70.14(n=47) 86.44(n=57)	
Similar Life Goals	(M) 4.54(n=3) (F) 4.54(n=3)	11.94(n=8) 9.14(n=6)	34.34(n=23) 31.84(n=21)	31.34(n=21) 33.34(n=22)	17.94(n=12) 21.24(n=14)	
*Commitment	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 0.04(n=0)	0.04(n=0) 1.54(n=1)	7.54(n=5) 7.64(n=5)	32.84(n=22) 22.74(n=15)	58.24(n=39) 68.24(n=45)	
Spouse Occupation	(M) 26.94(n=18) (F) 13.64(n=9)	13.44(n=9) 27.34(n=18)	32.84(n=22) 27.34(n=18)	19.44(n=13) 15.24(n=10)	7.54(n=5) 16.74(n=11)	
Income	(M) 4.54(n=3) (F) 1.54(n=1)	15.24(n=10) 15.24(n=10)	36.44(n=24) 39.44(n=26)	28.84(n=19) 25.84(n=17)	15.24(n=10) 30.24(n=22)	
My Occupation	(M) 10.44(n=7) (F) 10.84(n=7)	14.94(n=10) 26.24(n=17)	32.84(n=22) 35.44(n=23)	31.34(n=21) 16.94(n=11)	10.44(n=7) 10.84(n=7)	
Social Activities	(M) 10.44(n=7) (F) 7.64(n=5)	28.44(n=19) 21.24(n=14)	38.84(n=26) 37.34(n=25)	17.94(n=12) 28.84(n=19)	4.54(n=3) 4.54(n=3)	
Children	(M) 1.54(n=1) (F) 0.04(n=0)	4.54(n=3) 1.54(n=1)	13.44(n=9) 13.64(n=9)	23.94(n=16) 22.74(n=15)	56.74(n=38) 62.14(n=41)	

Table 36 (Continued)

Variable 41 to Variable 63	Sex	Not Important 1	Moderately Important 2	Important 3	Very Important 4	Extremely Important 5
*Communication	(M) (F)	1.5%(n=1) 0.0%(n=0)	1.5%(n=1) 0.0%(n=0)	16.4%(n=11) 7.6%(n=5)	16.4%(n=11) 25.0%(n=17)	64.2%(n=43) 66.7%(n=44)
Friends	(M) (F)	9.1%(n=6) 3.0%(n=2)	15.2%(n=10) 16.7%(n=11)	40.9%(n=27) 42.4%(n=28)	22.7%(n=15) 30.3%(n=20)	12.1%(n=8) 7.6%(n=5)
Extended Family	(M) (F)	14.9%(n=10) 3.0%(n=2)	19.4%(n=13) 16.7%(n=11)	29.9%(n=20) 34.8%(n=23)	28.4%(n=19) 34.8%(n=23)	7.5%(n=5) 10.6%(n=7)
*Shared Intimacy	(M) (F)	4.5%(n=3) 0.0%(n=0)	1.5%(n=1) 0.0%(n=0)	6.0%(n=4) 7.6%(n=5)	43.3%(n=29) 43.9%(n=29)	44.0%(n=30) 48.5%(n=32)
*Fidelity	(M) (F)	1.5%(n=1) 1.5%(n=1)	0.0%(n=0) 1.5%(n=1)	9.0%(n=6) 7.6%(n=5)	19.4%(n=13) 10.6%(n=7)	70.1%(n=47) 78.0%(n=52)
Sexual Expression	(M) (F)	3.0%(n=2) 3.0%(n=2)	3.0%(n=2) 0.0%(n=0)	16.7%(n=11) 27.3%(n=18)	43.3%(n=29) 39.4%(n=26)	33.3%(n=22) 30.3%(n=20)

n=67 for males; n=67 for females

The majority of the respondents ranked all of the characteristics in the Table 36 as either important, very important, and/or extremely important in making their marriage last. In terms of response numbers and order of importance, the ten most important characteristics identified as contributing to a lasting marriage were as follows: trust, honesty, fidelity, respect, commitment, communication, open communication, children, understanding, and shared intimacy. The least rated characteristics were social activities and extended family. Even though they were the least rated in terms

of ranked importance, they were still rated as moderately important, important, and/or very important.

A significant finding was that all respondents rated their own occupation as more important than their spouses' in making their marriage last. This finding provides need for further inquiry into the issues of perceptions of dual career couples in relation to marital and employment satisfaction.

The responses in this study are comparable to the Schlesinger and Tenhouse-Giblon's (1984) study. In terms of order of importance, the respondents ranked the following seven Schlesinger and Tenhouse-Giblon's (1984) variables as follows; trust, honesty, fidelity, respect, commitment, communication and shared intimacy. In Schlesinger and Tenhouse-Giblon's (1984) study the four most important factors identified by their sample were love, respect, trust, and communication. All of the Schlesinger and Tenhouse-Giblon (1984) variables in the Table 35 were also ranked as extremely important in contributing to a lasting marriage.

Additional characteristics that were individually identified (Variable 64, Other Factors) by the respondents as contributing to their marriage lasting

were as follows: extended family (in-laws), acceptance of one another, consideration for one another, commitment to vows, ability to accept biases, financial security, type of home, similar intellectual capacity, similar educational and cultural backgrounds, sense of humour, compromise, togetherness, prayer, love for one another, casual physical contact and understanding one's needs.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The results and the conclusions reached take into consideration the limited generalizability due to the nonprobability sample. The results are however consistent with other research and for this reason some general conclusions are supported regarding family strengths and characteristics of lasting marriages.

#### **Family Strengths and Marital Satisfaction**

The general conclusion is that couples in lasting marriages, defined as those married 15 or more years, are very satisfied with their marriages and display a high degree of family strengths. The data obtained from the scores on all of the MSI scales and particularly the Global Distress scale (GDS) strongly supports the



hypothesis that the longer the lasting marriage the higher the marital satisfaction and the stronger the family strengths. Also, the longer the lasting marriage the higher the level of overall marital satisfaction and commitment to the present relationship. Each variable is dependent upon one another in that lasting marriages indicates high levels of marital satisfaction and family strengths; and high levels of marital satisfaction and family strengths indicates lasting marriages.

As previously noted, the data may be interpreted as supporting previous research (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Stinnett, Carter, & Montgomery, 1972) which indicates that marital satisfaction throughout the life cycle has a curvilinear U-Shaped trend. This study also supports Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick's (1986) belief that growth can exist at the later stages of the life cycle. This finding is significant in that it provides a population for research which identifies marital/family strengths.

The 'family' strengths of long lasting marriages and very long lasting marriages is comparable. Even though both groups had high Family Strengths scores, the longer the marriage the higher the Family Strength scores. In comparing this sample with the population norms for the

Family Strengths scale (Olson, Larsen, & McCubbin, 1985) the results indicate that long lasting and very long lasting marriages report more family strengths than the general population.

If a larger random sample were obtained there may be less variation in 'strengths' among very long lasting marriages than there is among the long lasting marriages, or marriages from a broader population of couples. The likely reason is that the younger marriages are still attempting to establish themselves and are experiencing the normal life cycle stresses such as children, job stress, financial issues and so forth. Also, one expects that the longer the marriage the more shared definition of reality.

In comparison with the population norms, the scores obtained by this sample indicated higher levels of marital satisfaction. There would be more confidence in these results if the sample was both larger and randomly selected. Based on these findings, it is concluded that long lasting marriages have qualities which are different from those in the general population. These qualities are identified in the following sections.

**Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) Comparison**

Long lasting and very long lasting marriages in this study display scores which indicate high levels of satisfaction on all of the scales of the MSI. The level of satisfaction for both groups is higher than the population norms. The level of satisfaction for the very long lasting married group is higher than the long lasting married group on all scales. This supports the previously stated hypothesis that the longer the lasting marriage the higher the marital satisfaction and the stronger the family strengths.

As previously noted the CNV scale acts as a validity check. The data obtained from the sample give the researcher confidence in the validity of the responses on all scales. The sample displayed scores which were higher than the population norms. The longer the lasting marriage the higher the CNV score. Scores were not at a level which indicated any social desirability bias in responses.

In terms of global satisfaction, both long lasting and very long lasting married couples are likely to have low scores on the GDS scale with the very long lasting married couples scoring statistically lower with respect

to the presence of marital difficulties. Long lasting and very long lasting married couples are more content and less distressed than normative groups. There is also indication that very long lasting marriages operate within a narrow band of high satisfaction with there being less variation within this group. The results indicate that the average couple in a lasting marriage is very satisfied and committed to their marriage and that difficulties experienced in their marriage is not clinically threatening.

Both long lasting and very long lasting married couples are likely to have low scores on the AFC scale with the very long lasting couples indicating slightly more open expression of affection and interpersonal closeness. According to MSI interpretations (Snyder, 1981), their level of affective communication and interpersonal closeness are such that couples in lasting marriages are not likely to appear in clinical populations. The results indicate that the average couple in a long lasting marriage is satisfied with affectional communication in their relationship.

The PSC scale scores indicate that couples in very long lasting marriages have lower scores than couples in

long lasting marriages. This indicates that couples in very long lasting marriages have developed more ability to resolve differences in their relationship. According to MSI interpretations (Snyder, 1981), their level of problem solving communication and low levels of disharmony are such that they are not likely to appear in clinical populations. The results indicate that the average couple in a long lasting marriage and a very long lasting marriage are above the norm and have very effective problem solving communication within the relationship. It would appear that these couples have similar perceptions in terms of issues related to problem solving communication. As previously noted differences in perceptions may cause disagreements, misunderstanding and problems within the marital relationship (Allen & Thompson, 1984). The "more direct agreement between partners will lead to more satisfying communication for both partners" (Allen & Thompson, 1984, p. 917). This point will be explored further in the discussion of role orientation/perceptions in lasting marriages.

The scores on the TTO scale indicate that the very long lasting married couples are slightly more satisfied than long lasting married couples with the quality of

time spent together. Both T scores are associated with couple satisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together. Couples who score in this range are likely to share common interests and to benefit from one another's company (Snyder, 1981). These couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations. The results indicate that the average couple in a long lasting marriage is very satisfied with the quality and the quantity of leisure time spent together.

Couples in long lasting and very long lasting marriages are likely to have low scores on the FIN scale with the very long lasting couples indicating slightly more satisfaction with financial management and decision making in their marriages. Their ability to deal with finances within their relationships indicates that couples in lasting marriages are not likely to appear in clinical populations. Both T scores reflect " ...the general absence of marital distress in the area of finances. Fiscal responsibilities are likely to be shared by both spouses. Financial strains incurred by the couple do not impact negatively upon the marital relationship" (Snyder, 1981, p.28). The results indicate that the average couple in a long lasting marriage is

very satisfied with financial management within their relationship.

Both long lasting married and very long lasting married couples are likely to have low scores on the SEX scale, with the long lasting married couples indicating slightly more satisfaction with sexual expression and activity in their marital relationship. These couples are not likely to appear in clinical populations. Both T scores reflect a "...general positive attitude toward the overall quality of the sexual relationship. Disagreements regarding the frequency or variety of sexual behaviours are likely to be infrequent and viewed as having little importance to the overall relationship" (Snyder, 1981, p. 28). The results indicate that the average couple in a long lasting marriage is similarly satisfied with sexual expression within their relationship.

The scores on the ROR scale indicate that both long lasting and very long lasting married couples are likely to have high scores with the long lasting married couples having slightly higher scores. Both groups reflect scores which indicate flexibility in sharing of traditional roles (Snyder, 1981). However, the long

lasting married couples are less traditional in their marital and parental roles and have more tendency to share decisions. This finding is consistent with the population studied considering that the very long lasting married couples are older and from more traditional backgrounds. It is not likely that there are any clinical differences between these two groups in comparison with the general population of satisfied couples.

The scores on the FAM scale indicate that the long lasting married couples group have a stronger possibility of having disruption in their family of origin. Their scores fall in the moderate range (45-60T) which indicates "... significant distress in the parents' marriage." (Snyder, 1981,p.30). It cannot be concluded that all long lasting married couples in the general population have parents who experience significant distress in their marital relationships. If problems did occur it would appear that the individuals were capable of differentiating themselves from any emotional attachments to the problems; as defined by Bowen (1978).

A general conclusion in this study is that couples in very long lasting marriages are less likely than couples



in long lasting marriages to experience family of origin problems which effect their marital relationship. Since the mean ( $X=4.11$ ,  $T=43.50$ ) for the very long lasting married couples group fell within a the low scores range (below 45T), it is indicated that the average couple in a very long lasting marriage are more likely to have had family experiences characterized by warmth and harmony.

As indicated by the scores obtained on the DSC scale, both long lasting and very long lasting marriages are satisfied with respect to their overall relationship with their children. The small clinical difference indicates that the couples in very long lasting marriages are slightly more satisfied. Again the direction in the scores leads to the conclusion that the longer the marriage the more satisfaction with their relationship with their children.

Even though both groups have scores below the population norms, the very long lasting married couples group has slightly lower scores indicating slightly more positive relationships with respect to issues around childrearing. This difference is not significant.

The direction in the CCR scale scores are similar to

the those scores obtained on the previous dimensions. The results indicate that couples in very long lasting marriages have even more positive interaction between each other with regards to children. There is also less likelihood of children contributing to marital conflict (Snyder,1981). The longer the lasting marriage the less conflict. In terms of the family life cycle, one conclusion could be that there would be less conflict expected around childrearing once children had grown up and left the home.

#### **Curvilinear U-Shaped Trend in Marital Satisfaction**

This study supports previous research which indicates that marital satisfaction does not support a linear decline (Erikson, Erikson, and Kivnick, 1986) and that marital satisfaction changes thought out the life cycle in a curvilinear U-Shaped curve (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979). This study supports the position that couples in lasting marriages have subjective perceptions of their marriage which is quite satisfied and increasing on the continuum of the curvilinear U-Shaped trend. This premise is supported by Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick (1986). They explain that regardless of early

perceptions of lower levels of satisfaction, it is not the experiences per se which determines satisfaction but the perceptions and meaning that couples in lasting marriages derived from the situation and the meanings it has at the present time.

This study also supports Stinnett, Carter, and Montgomery (1972) study which suggests that marital disenchantment over the life cycle may in fact be a myth and that older couples perceived their marriages as favourable and increasing in later years. As previously noted, the present study has limited generalization in due to the fact that this was a voluntary sample. Couples who were not satisfied with their relationships were dissatisfied with their marriages may have elected to not participate in the study.

#### **Role Orientation (Male and Female Differences)**

As previously indicated there is a clinical difference between males and females in terms of role orientation in lasting marriages. While both groups have scores which reflect flexibility in role sharing, the slight difference of 2T in the males scores suggest greater flexibility in sharing of traditional roles and

decision making (Snyder, 1981). Since the ROR scale does not measure role conflict, it cannot be assumed that males in lasting marriages are more satisfied with their roles than females in lasting marriages. Also the difference does not suggest that their roles are not congruent. If congruency is defined in terms of subjective impressions and agreement regarding role expectations, their role definition of mutual expectations may in fact be congruent.

These results are consistent with Houle and Kiely's (1984) study on intimacy, which indicated apparent sex differences. As previously noted, they found in later stages of a marriage the development of more expression of intimacy in males. The data from the Houle and Kiely (1984) study quantifies male and female role differences and suggest that congruence may be approached as the marriage relationship develops and as the male ages.

This study suggests role difference between males in long lasting and very long lasting marriages. In comparison to males in very long lasting marriages, long lasting married males have a more unconventional view of marital and parental roles, and decision making around roles is more likely to be shared. There is a similar

direction in the data for the females; however the difference is not as significant. The significant difference between the males in long lasting and very long lasting marriages can be accounted for by the general change in societal perceptions and expectations of a male in a marital role.

There is a difference when comparing males and females in long lasting marriages with the population norms. There is a difference of 4T in comparing long lasting married males and long lasting married females with the population norms. This indicates that the long lasting married males have an even more unconventional view of marital and parental roles than the long lasting married females and the general population. Likewise, long lasting married females have a more unconventional view than the general population.

The direction in data is suggestive of the interpretation of differences between marriages from one generation to another. It should be noted however that the differences are not great and may not be overly significant. There is no indication to imply that all observed differences can be accounted for by developments within the marriage. Males and females in very long

lasting marriages are obviously from a generation with a more traditional orientation toward marital and parental roles. Is expected that with long lasting married males and females, societal changes are more likely in terms of a more nontraditional and on unconventional view of marital and parental roles.

**Problem Solving Communication**  
**(Male and Female Differences)**

The results indicate that both males and females in lasting marriages are quite effective with solving problems in their relationship. In terms of respective marital lengths in comparing males and females in lasting marriages, there is a slight difference. Overall, the results suggest that generally males in lasting marriages are slightly more effective than females in lasting marriages with respect to problem solving communication.

It should be noted that the differences observed in this study were not overly significant in that there was only a slight difference of 1T and 2T. Given the direction of the data, if a larger sample were used the differences might be greater and more significant. The overall results do indicate that the longer the lasting

marriage the more effective the problem solving in the marriage.

In comparing lasting marriages with the population norms, the data in this study suggest that both males and females in long lasting and very long lasting marriages are more effective with problem solving communication in their marriage than couples from the general population. Couples in lasting marriages are more committed to and are more effective in resolving differences when they occur. The data in this study is consistent with previous research which suggests that couples in lasting marriages are committed to the relationship and are effective in resolving problems (Ammons & Stinnett, 1980; Beavers, 1985; Schlesinger & Tenhouse-Giblon, 1984).

The data also suggest that long lasting and very long lasting couples are not likely to show up in clinical samples.

#### **Marital Commitment and General Marital Satisfaction**

##### **(Male and Female Differences)**

In comparing male and female difference, the data suggest that there is no clinical difference in marital commitment and overall marital satisfaction between men

and women in marriages of comparable lengths. The conclusion reached is that men and women married for either a long time or a very long time are highly and similarly satisfied with their marriages. As previously noted, the longer the lasting marriage the higher the level of overall marital satisfaction and commitment to the present relationship. For these individuals and couples one expects an absence of pervasive difficulties with sources of discontent having little effect on the relationship. It is not surprising that the lasting married couples in this study also experienced low levels of spousal violence and low levels of infidelity.

Given that 2 females reported physical abuse occurring in their marriage, it is anticipated that the reporting of no physical abuse by the males was not accurate. This is not unusual because of the sensitivity of the subject. However, because of the high levels of marital commitment and effective problem solving by the couples, it is not anticipated that the occurrence of physical would be high.

Based on the sensitivity of the subject of infidelity it is not possible to determine if the response of 14.95% is unreported. A high infidelity rate was not expected



given that the couples in this sample were high in marital satisfaction and family strengths. It is speculated that even though there may have been periods of lower marital satisfaction (ie., prior to 15 years married), marital commitment was strong enough to maintain fidelity.

In terms of this study, the concept of infidelity is in need of further research in terms of how infidelity occurred. For example, was it a result of choice or action on the individual's part or the part of the spouse. Also of significance for further research is whether or not couples define conflict centering around infidelity.

In comparing lasting marriages with the population norms, the data in this study suggest that both males and females in long lasting and very long lasting marriages have higher levels of overall marital satisfaction and relationship commitment than do males and females in the general population.

#### **Affective Communication** **(Male and Female Differences)**

In comparing male and female differences, the data

suggest that there is no clinical difference in affective communication between men and women with similar marital lengths. The conclusion is that men and women married for either a long time or a very long time have relationships which are similar with respect to open expression of affection and interpersonal closeness.

In comparing lasting marriages with the population norms, the data suggest that both males and females in long lasting and very long lasting marriages have relationships which are characterized by higher levels of affective communication than male and females from the general population.

#### **Role Perceptions and Communication**

The positive correlation between similar role expectations or perceptions and effective communication (Strucker, 1971; Allen and Thompson, 1984) is quite apparent in this study. The correlation suggest that couples in lasting marriages who have similar role perceptions will have effective communication skills and higher levels of marital satisfaction. Overall, the lasting married couples in this study displayed congruent role expectations, effective communication and high

levels of marital satisfaction.

Even though the couples in long lasting marriages indicated roles which were more unconventional and less traditional, there is no indication that there is any more congruency in their marriages than with the couples in very long lasting marriages. As previously noted, the ROR scale measures role preference and not role conflict. Also, since marital satisfaction is based on subjective perceptions (Burr et al., 1979; Goldstien, 1981; Nelsen, 1980), it cannot be concluded that very long lasting married couples are less satisfied with their marriages than couples in long lasting marriages.

Since the couples in longer lasting marriage have more effective communication, the conclusion reached in this study is that the longer the marriage the more congruent the role perceptions. This conclusion is consistent with previous research which suggests that the congruence of perception of spouses continued to be of major significance in relation to marital satisfaction in older couples (Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978).

Due to the nature of this study, no direct cause and effect relationship has been established. It is apparent, however, that there is an association between

longer lasting marriages and congruent role perceptions.

This study supports the research on marital perceptions, which suggests that " ... more direct agreement between both partners will lead to more satisfying communication for both partners." (Allen & Thompson, 1984, p.917). Recent research in role theory maintain that perceptions in marriage are important factors in determining marital satisfaction (Bahr, Chappell & Leigh, 1983; Strucker, 1971; Bochner, Krueger & Chmielewski, 1982). It was previously established that the sample of lasting marriages in this study have both high levels of marital satisfaction and effective communication. The sample also displays congruent perceptions on six different variables, which explored issues of power and conflict resolution. Paired couples cross-tabulation analysis indicate that a significant majority of paired couples have congruent perceptions on issues of the frequency that disagreements are settled (variable 33); the time it takes to settle disagreements (variable 34); the frequency with which disagreements are avoided in their marriage (variable 35); who accommodates in settling disagreements (variable 36); sharing of important decisions (variable 37); and their perception

of who is the dominant person in terms of decision making in their marriage (variable 39).

In terms of their perceptions of who was dominant in the relationship, there were more males than females who perceived themselves as more dominant. There were also more females than males who perceived the male as more dominant. These perceptions are consistent with traditional attitudes supporting male dominance on some dimensions in marriage. Since many couples in lasting marriages are from traditional generational backgrounds, perceptions of male dominance is not unexpected. As this study implies, there is no evidence to suggest that there is a positive correlation between traditional perceptions of male and female roles and low levels of marital satisfaction.

#### **Power and Conflict**

The couples were quite effective in resolving issues of conflict and creating balance of power in their relationship. These findings are consistent with the research which suggests couples in lasting marriages are effective in problem solving (Schlesinger & Tenhouse-Giblon, 1984), with relationships characterized by

balance of power (Klagsburn, 1985). In this study, (1) the majority of couples in lasting marriages report that disagreements were settled most of the time, (2) that they were effective in settling disagreements (within 48 hours), (3) that they avoided disagreements, (4) that they equally accommodated in settling disagreements, (5) that decisions were shared, and (6) that there was equality in terms of decision making.

Even though the majority of the couples indicate that they avoided disagreements, it cannot be assumed that this is a negative characteristic. This concept was not clearly defined in the questionnaire, and for this reason it is not possible to analyze if the couples avoid major disagreement or if few troubling situations are defined as problems. It should also be noted that avoiding disagreements could also indicate denial of the problem. It is concluded however that given the low level of spousal violence in this sample, effective management of disagreements may reflect much more effective coping.

Also because the concept of 'avoid disagreements' was not clearly defined, it was not possible to analyze why a larger number of males than females avoided disagreements most of the time. As previously noted, the

results also suggest that generally males in lasting marriages are slightly more effective than females in lasting marriages with respect to problem solving communication. A larger sample with an instrument which clearly defines the concept may give more direction to how couples and individuals partners in lasting marriages resolve conflict.

Even though the results indicate that the majority of both males and females perceived the husband and wife as having equally shared power, more males than females perceived the husband as more dominant. It would appear that the females perceive themselves in a more non-traditional perspective in terms of perceived less male dominance. This is consistent with the present day non-tradition perspective on male and female roles. It would appear that the majority of males in this study have perceived traditional male roles. It should be noted that this is a subjective impression and does not suggest role conflict or traditional marital roles. As previously noted, in comparison of male and female role orientation, the male ROR scores reflect a slight difference of 2T suggesting greater flexibility in sharing of traditional roles and decision making (Snyder,

1981). This would indicate a non-traditional marital role orientation.

In terms of solving problems in their family, only the females went outside of the family to seek help with problems that occurred in the family. Based on this finding, the study provides an avenue for further enquiry based on male and female differences problem definition and the need to seek outside help. The finding is in support of the traditional perspective that females are more open to discussing their problems. The only professional group that was sought was the clergy. No females sought the help of social workers. Overall, the majority of both males and females solve problems within their own family. This finding is consistent with Mudd and Tabin's (1982) study which found that successful families often resolve problems within the family.

The majority of both males and females also report that their past problems has no impact or little impact on their present relationship with their spouse. Again this finding supports previous research which suggests that 'healthy couples' operate mainly in the present as opposed to allowing past problems to directly and actively influence their present relationship (Beavers,



1985).

### **Religion and lasting Marriages**

As previously indicated, the literature suggests that religion is an important component to a strong family (Stinnett, 1985) and a lasting marriage (Sporakowski & Hughston, 1979). In this study, the majority of individuals in a lasting marriage describe themselves as religious. There is no indication that those who changed their religion at the time of their marriage were any less religious than those who did not. The finding supports no indication that marriages of mixed religions are any more satisfying than marriages of the same religion.

### **Pregnant Before Marriage**

This research suggests that pregnancy before marriage did not have any negative impact on marital satisfaction. Both females who were pregnant before marriage and males who married females who were pregnant before marriage reported high satisfaction. A significant finding was with the female 45T score on the FAM scale, which was on the borderline of indicating a

disruptive relationship with parents (Snyder, 1981). This may not be uncommon considering possible past conflict around issues of premarital pregnancy. Based on the high marital satisfaction levels of the couples, it is likely that these problems were either resolved or did not have any direct or indirect influence on marital satisfaction. Since the score is on the borderline of low and moderate scores, there is no strong conclusive evidence to suggest extensive disruption. In addition, since their marital satisfaction scores on all other scales were quite high, it is concluded that if conflict existed in their relationship with their parents it has since been resolved or the conflict was never extensive. If conflict did exist, it obviously has no influence on their overall perception of marital satisfaction.

#### **Present Marital Satisfaction and**

##### **Years of Reported Highest Marital Satisfaction**

In terms of subjective perceptions of marital satisfaction, lasting married couples in this study report high levels of satisfaction when asked "How satisfied are you with your present marriage?". The data also indicates that the longer the lasting marriage, the

higher the reported levels of marital satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous research (Klagsburn, 1985; Sporkowski & Hughston, 1979), which suggests that marital strength and high levels of marital satisfaction exist in lasting marriages. The data in this study also support the research which suggest a U-Shaped curvilinear trend in marital satisfaction over the life cycle (Erikson et al., 1986; Gilford and Bengtson, 1979; Stinnett et al., 1972). Since the MSI scale scores are consistent with the couples' subjective perceptions of high levels of marital satisfaction, the data in this study validate the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) (Snyder, 1981).

In terms of male and female differences, the findings suggest that females in very long lasting marriages report even higher levels of marital satisfaction in their current marital situation and that satisfaction increases with years married. The direction of the results indicate that there would be similarly reported results if a larger sample were used. Overall, the majority of both males and females in lasting marriages report satisfaction increasing with years married. Again, these findings are consistent with the research

which supports the U-Shaped curvilinear trend in marital satisfaction over the life cycle (Erikson et al., 1986; Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Stinnett, Carter & Montgomery, 1972).

In terms of the reported years of highest marital satisfaction, the long lasting married couples reported 11 to 15 years and the very long lasting married couples reported 26 years as the years of highest marital satisfaction. Again, this is supportive of the U-Shaped curvilinear trend in marital satisfaction. Perceptions of marital satisfaction is based upon subjective interpretations of how they perceive marital satisfaction at that particular time (Burr et al., 1979; Biddle, 1986; Goldstein, 1984; Goldstein, 1981; Erikson et al., 1986). As years of marriage increase, so does their subjective perception of increased marital satisfaction. Erikson et al. (1986) indicate, that the individual's present perceptions of high levels of marital satisfaction may not be determined by their previous perceptions in earlier years of marriage. It is also during the developmental stage of the life cycle that the longer married couples are experiencing what Erikson et al. (1986) refers to as the life cycle curving "... back on

the life of the individual, allowing as we have indicated, a re-experiencing of earlier stages in a new form" (p.327).

This study has demonstrated important characteristics which are associated with family strengths and lasting marriages. Moss (1989) emphasizes the importance of normative data as the basis of conceptualizing family functioning. There must be a focus away from pathology and more towards family/marital strengths if therapists are to promote family and marital well-being.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The concept of strengths has been consistent throughout the history of Social Work, where an emphasis has been placed on strengths and well-being in families (Richmond, 1917). The focus on marital/family strengths is also present in today's society where there is emphasis on preventive therapy such as premarital counselling, marriage preparation courses and early brief intervention with couples who are experiencing situational or transitional stress.

This study has provided new information and

understanding of lasting marriages and the factors associated with family strengths. Several factors identified in this study which are of significant are as follows: (1) couples in lasting marriages have a high degree of marital satisfaction, (2) there is support that marital satisfaction is in the form of a U-Shaped curvilinear trend over the life cycle, (3) couples in lasting marriages have a high level of commitment toward their relationship and their marriage , (4) couples in lasting marriages have effective problem solving abilities and have open affective communication, and (5) couples in lasting marriages have well defined role perceptions which are flexible and open to change. It is hoped that these findings will provide valuable information to social work practitioners and other clinicians who are concerned with promoting family well-being and preventing marital dissolutions.

This study has demonstrated the necessity for therapists to focus on more detailed assessments and to formulate treatment plans for counselling and therapy without relying only on models of pathology. It is recommended that social workers and marital/family therapy instructors focus toward an understanding of the

factors contributing to marital/family strengths and well-being.

It is hoped that this study will provide the necessary ground work for further refinement of the concepts of marital and family strengths for application to a broader and more representative population. Research focusing on a national level would provide extensive and much needed data, which would contribute to the identification of strengths in lasting marriages and families. Further research focusing on lasting marriages and family strengths is of particular importance given the external stresses and transitions facing couples and families in present day society.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Information for Media Advertisement, Doctor's  
Leaflet and Church Bulletin**

**Lasting Marriage Research**

A Professional Social Worker is conducting a study of the characteristics of lasting marriages for a Master of Social Work Thesis. Information will be obtained via a questionnaire and two standardized scales. Procedures have been established in order to keep the information confidential, as provided by those who agree to participate in this research. If you have been married or living with the same spouse for 15 or more years, you and your spouse are invited to participate.

Please contact in writing or by telephone:

Mr. Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.  
Monaghan Hall,  
Western Memorial Regional Hospital,  
P.O. Box 178,  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland,  
A2H 6J7.  
Phone: (709) 634-7853.

Detailed information will be provided when the researcher is contacted. If after receiving more detailed information, you or your spouse decide to not participate, your decision will be respected.



**APPENDIX B**

**Letter to Physicians and Clergy**

Dear .....:

I am a professional social worker completing my graduate studies and I am presently conducting a study of lasting marriages for a Masters of Social Work Thesis at the School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of lasting marriages. It is hoped that this information will be useful for marriage counsellors and family therapists. It is expected that the results will lend support to the prevention of marital dissolution and the promotion of family well-being.

My study defines a lasting marriage as one that has lasted fifteen or more years. The information will be obtained from a questionnaire and two standard scales, which take about 45 minutes to complete. The returns will be anonymous and study results will be summarized in such a fashion as to protect the anonymity of those involved.

This study has been approved by the Graduate Studies Committee of the School of Social Work, and it is being supervised by Dr. M. Dennis Kimberley, C.S.W., Associate Professor, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Enclosed you will find a notice requesting couples to participate. I would appreciate it if you would post the notice in your waiting room and bring it to the attention of any of your patients who have been in their current marriage for fifteen years or more.

**Appendix B (Cont.)**

I wish to thank you for your time and anticipated cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.  
Monaghan Hall,  
Western Memorial Regional Hospital,  
P.O. Box 178,  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland,  
A2H 6J7.  
(709) 634-7853.

**APPENDIX C**

**Information for Potential Participants  
Who Inquire About the Study**

Dear Couple:

I am a professional Social Worker completing graduate studies on lasting marriages as a Masters of Social Work Thesis at the School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland. My thesis supervisor is Dr. M. Dennis Kimberley, Associate Professor at the School of Social Work.

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand the characteristics of lasting marriages. It is well known that many couples today experience marital difficulties which lead to separation and divorce. Professional social workers know a lot about what causes separation and divorce; the results of this study may help us understand those factors that contribute to lasting marriages.

My study defines a lasting marriage as one that has lasted fifteen years or longer. If you have been married to your present spouse (legally or common-law) for fifteen or more years, I would appreciate your participation in this study.

The information will be obtained through a questionnaire and two standard scales. These will be hand delivered or mailed to selected volunteer couples, who will then return their questionnaires to my supervisor in a prepaid self-addressed envelope, utilizing a procedure that is designed to protect anonymity. The questionnaires take approximately 45 minutes for each spouse to complete. If after receiving the above information, or after receiving the questionnaires and scales, you or your spouse decide to not participate in my study, your decision will be respected.

**Appendix C (Cont.)**

Procedures have been established that will maintain the anonymity of participants. Study results will be summarized and written in such a fashion as to protect the anonymity of those involved. Procedures have been established to ensure that the information you give will not identify you.

Thank you,

Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.  
Monaghan Hall,  
Western Memorial Regional Hospital,  
P.O. Box 178,  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland,  
A2H 6J7.  
(709) 634-7853.

**APPENDIX D**

**Short Letter of Appeal**

(For those who cannot be contacted by telephone)

Dear .....

I am contacting all participants to inquire whether or not they have received their questionnaires on my study of the characteristics of lasting marriages.

If you have received your questionnaire package and are still receptive to completing it, I would appreciate your valuable information.

If you have received your questionnaire package and if you are no longer receptive to completing it, I would appreciate it if you would return the questionnaires in the prepaid mailer.

To remain anonymous please do not put your name or your spouse's name on the questionnaire(s) or the prepaid return envelope.

Please ensure that you understand the terms of consent for participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by letter or telephone.

Thank you,

Bert Bennett, B.S.W.  
Monaghan Hall, Box 178  
Western Memorial Regional Hospital  
Corner Brook, Newfoundland  
A2H 6J7

(709) 634-7853

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Covering Letter**

**Dear.....**

**Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of the characteristics of lasting marriages.**

**I am a professional social worker who is completing this study as part of the requirements for a Master of Social Work degree in the School of Social Work at Memorial University of Newfoundland.**

**The information you give is needed if professionals are to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to lasting marriages. It is hoped that the results of this study will assist professional social workers in their efforts to promote family well-being and to prevent of marital dissolution.**

**The enclosed questionnaires and scales focus on marital satisfaction, communication, perceptions and commitment in lasting marriages. Please complete your questionnaires separate and independent from your spouse and return all materials (booklets, answer sheets, etc.) in the enclosed unmarked envelope which, in turn, must be enclosed in the prepaid mailer. Please complete and return the instruments/questionnaires within one week of receiving this material. Please do not discuss your answers with your spouse.**

**It is important that the questionnaire be completed separately without discussion with your spouse.**

**To protect your confidentiality and anonymity, do not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire, the unmarked envelop, or the prepaid mailer. This will ensure that the information you provide will not identify you. Additionally, you will note that your completed instruments/questionnaires are to be mailed to my supervisor (Dr M.D. Kimberley) at Memorial University; this procedure will further protect your anonymity.**

**Appendix E (Cont.)**

Before you complete and return the questionnaire and scales, please read and ensure you understand the attached material in "Consent to Participate in a Study of the Characteristics of Lasting Marriages." If you wish any further clarification, you are invited to telephone me.

Thank you! Your participation is valued and much appreciated.

Sincerely yours

Bert Bennett, B.S.W.  
634-7853 (Home) 637-5219 (Office)

**APPENDIX F**

**Consent to participate in a Study  
of the Characteristics of Lasting Marriages**

**Purposes of this Study:**

- To determine the characteristics of lasting marriages, through an exploratory survey.
- To meet the requirements for a Master of Social Work Degree at Memorial University.

**Researcher:** Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.  
Professional Social Worker  
Pursuing a Graduate Degree in Social Work

**Supervisor:** Dr. M. Dennis Kimberley, C.S.W.  
Associate Professor  
School of Social Work  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
A1B 3X8

**TERMS OF CONSENT**

By this point in time you have received some written and oral information on my survey studying the characteristics of lasting marriages. By this point in time you have agreed, verbally, to participate in my study. If upon reading the questionnaires and scales you change your decision then your change of decision will be respected.

As the instruments are costly, it would be much appreciated if you would return them, even if unanswered.

By completing these questionnaires and returning them in the enclosed pre-paid envelopes, the investigator is assuming that you consent to:

- completing the questionnaires(s);
- having the information you have provided summarized in a research report; and
- having some aspect of the report published



**Consent to Participate (Cont.)**

To ensure that your anonymity is protected, do not put your name or your spouse's name on any part of this questionnaire, the unmarked envelope, or the prepaid mailer.

Again, if you do not consent to complete the questionnaire, please return it uncompleted in the enclosed prepaid envelopes.

Your anonymity will be protected and confidentiality will be protected in that there is no procedure whereby your name can be correlated with the questionnaires or scales. The list of participants names will be destroyed as soon as the last reminder is sent to those who showed interest in the study.

The original questionnaires and the summary of data in a computer will be under the control of the researcher (B. Bennett, a professional social worker) and will be under the supervision of his supervisor (Dr. M. D. Kimberley, Associate Professor, Memorial University). No names will be kept in files with questionnaires. No names will be entered into a computer database. When the study is complete, original survey questionnaires will be destroyed.

The questionnaire and scale will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Some of the questionnaire items request sensitive information about you and your marriage. It is important to the study that you complete all questions, but I respect that you have the right to not answer any item if you so choose.

While the completion of the questionnaires may provide you with some interesting information about your marriage, it should in no way be interpreted as a measure of the quality of your marriage.

**Consent to Participate (Cont.)**

It is anticipated that the study will be completed by May 1990. If you wish information about the findings of this study, you may contact the School of Social Work at Memorial University, after May 1990 (709-737-8165).

Many thanks for your interest.

Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.

(709) 634-7853

**APPENDIX G**

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**NEXT PAGE**





MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 3X8

*School of Social Work*

Telex: 0164101

Tel.: (709) 8165

July 24, 1989

To whom it may concern:

This letter is being written to advise you that the study of the characteristics of lasting marriages by Mr. Bert Bennett has been approved by the School of Social Work and the Senate Research Committee of Memorial University.

The study is being conducted by Mr. Bert Bennett, a professional social worker, who is pursuing graduate studies in social work at Memorial University. Mr. Bennett is conducting this research under the supervision of Dr. M. Dennis Kimberley, C.S.W. who is an Associate Professor in our faculty.

I wish to encourage you to participate in this study and to offer Mr. Bennett your time and effort. Our hope is that the knowledge gained from this study will give professional social workers new insights into the characteristics of lasting marriages and also into the implications for professional services to families.

Many thanks for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Frank R. Hawkins  
Professor and Director

FRH/dod

**APPENDIX H**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**Lasting Marriages**

The researcher is assuming that before you answer any of the questions below that you have read and understood the purposes of this study and that you have read, understood, and agree to the terms of consent.

The first set of questions ask about you and your marriage. Please complete the questions independently of your spouse.

1. Are you male? or female? (Please circle)
2. How long have you been married to your present spouse? \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. How old were you when you married your present spouse? \_\_\_\_\_ years
4. How old were you on your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- 5a. Is this your first marriage? (Please circle) **YES** **NO**  
If NO how many times have you been previously married? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5b. Your previous marriage ended due to: (Please circle)  
death of a spouse? separation?  
divorce? other (please specify)? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5c. If this marriage is the second, third or more, are there children in your blended family from:  
a. male spouse? (Please circle) **YES** **NO**  
b. female spouse? (Please circle) **YES** **NO**  
If YES, how many are presently living with you? \_\_\_\_\_  
AGES; \_\_\_\_\_ youngest? \_\_\_\_\_ oldest?
6. Have you had any children? (Please circle) **YES** **NO**  
If YES, how many? \_\_\_\_\_  
If YES, how many are presently living with you \_\_\_\_\_.  
AGES; \_\_\_\_\_ youngest \_\_\_\_\_ oldest

7. Do you have adult children living away from home? (Please circle)  
YES NO

If yes, how would you describe your contact with your adult children? (Circle the one most appropriate)

- no contact
- weekly contact
- monthly contact
- less than monthly

If your response does not apply to all of your children, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is your religion? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did you change your religion at time of marriage to your current spouse?

If YES, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being actively religious and 5 not religious, how religious do you perceive yourself?

1 2 3 4 5 (Please circle)

11. Are you presently employed outside the home? (Please circle)

YES NO

If YES, what is your employment status? (Please circle)

- 1. permanent employment;
- 2. temporary employment;
- 3. part time employment;
- 4. seasonal employment;
- 5. other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_.

12. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Please estimate your family income from all sources? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

It is recognized that these next questions are very sensitive; however, they are important to the study. PLEASE FEEL FREE to answer them.

14. Was the female spouse in this marriage pregnant before marriage (Legal or Common - Law)?

Please circle: YES NO

15. Did your spouse already have a child/children when you married him/her? (Please circle) YES NO

If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

The next set of questions ask about marital satisfaction and factors associated with lasting marriages.

16. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very satisfied and 5 not satisfied, how satisfied are you with:

(a) your present marriage? (please circle)  
1 2 3 4 5

(b) your present spousal relationship?(please circle)  
1 2 3 4 5

17. With increasing years married, how do you view satisfaction in your marriage? (Please circle one category)

(A) Increasing with years married  
(B) Decreasing with years married  
(C) Remaining the same.  
(D) Other:[please specify] \_\_\_\_\_

18. What years of marriage were more satisfying for you? (Please circle one category)

(A) 1 - 5  
(B) 6 - 10  
(C) 11 - 15  
(D) 16 - 20  
(E) 21 - 25  
(F) 26 or more

19. Disagreements and arguments are common in most marriages. In your marriage, when arguments or disagreements occur, are they usually settled: (Please circle one)
- (a) most of the time?
  - (b) often?
  - (c) seldom?
  - (d) never?
  - (e) not applicable; we do not argue or have disagreements.
20. If arguments or disagreements occur, how long does it usually take for you and your partner to settle them: (Please circle one)
- (a) within 48 hours?
  - (b) under one week, but over two days?
  - (c) over one week, but less than two?
  - (d) more than two weeks?
  - (e) not applicable; we never resolve our disagreements.
21. Do you avoid disagreements: (Please circle one)
- (a) most of the time?
  - (b) often?
  - (c) seldom?
  - (d) Never?
22. When disagreements are settled do you feel that (please circle one category):
- (a) you accommodate more of the time?
  - (b) your spouse accommodates more of the time?
  - (c) that accommodation is equal in the long run?
23. Are important decisions shared in your marriage?
- (Please circle one) (A) YES (B) NO (C) SOMETIMES
- (b) If "no" or "sometimes", who makes most of the decisions, you or your spouse?
24. It is not uncommon for one spouse to be more dominant in the relationship. In your relationship, who is the more dominant in making decisions? (Please circle one)
- (A) male spouse (B) female spouse (C) at times each





Please identify and rate (1 to 5) items that may have been missed.

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

27. It is recognized that the next question is a very sensitive question; please feel free to answer.

Has infidelity occurred in your marriage? (Please circle)

YES NO

If "Yes", how would you describe the impact on your marriage? (Please Circle One)

- (a) No impact;
- (b) Some positive impact on our relationship;
- (c) Some negative impact but modest;
- (d) High impact, my spouse is still hurt;or
- (e) High impact, I am still hurt;
- (f) Not Applicable as my spouse does not know.

Please make any clarifying comments on your answer in the space provided:

28. It is recognized that the next question is also very sensitive; please feel free to answer.

Have you experienced physical abuse from your spouse?  
(Please circle) YES NO

If "YES", how would you describe the impact on your marriage? (Please Circle One)

- (a) No impact;
- (b) Some positive impact on our relationship;
- (c) Some negative impact, but modest;
- (d) High impact, I am still hurt;
- (e) High impact, my spouse is still feeling guilty;
- (f) Very High impact, I am still abused.

Please make any clarifying comments on your answer, in the space provided:

29. The next set of items relate to how you see your family (i.e.: family meaning you and your spouse, and your children). On a scale of 1 to 5 , please rate the following items as they best apply to your family. Fill in the number that best applies, in the left hand column.

Response Choices				
1 strongly disagree	2 moderately disagree	3 neither agree nor disagree	4 moderately agree	5 strongly agree
<input type="checkbox"/> A.	We can express our feelings.			
<input type="checkbox"/> B.	We tend to worry about many things.			
<input type="checkbox"/> C.	We really do trust and confide in each other.			
<input type="checkbox"/> D.	We have the same problems over and over.			
<input type="checkbox"/> E.	Family members feel loyal to the family.			
<input type="checkbox"/> F.	Accomplishing what we want to do seems difficult for us.			
<input type="checkbox"/> G.	We are critical of each other.			
<input type="checkbox"/> H.	We share similar values and beliefs as a family.			
<input type="checkbox"/> I.	Things work out well for us as a family.			
<input type="checkbox"/> J.	Family members respect one another.			
<input type="checkbox"/> K.	There are many conflicts in our family.			
<input type="checkbox"/> L.	We are proud of our family.			

(From, Olson, Larsen & McCubbin, 1985)

30. Most families and couples experience normal problems. When you have experienced normal family-couple problems have you:  
(Please circle all that apply)

- solved them within your immediate family?
- obtained help or counsel from friends or relatives?
- obtained help or counsel from clergy?
- obtained help or counsel from a professional counsellor?
- obtained help or counsel from your family physician?
- not solved the problem(s)?

31. To what degree to you allow past problems to impact your present relationship with your spouse? (Please circle one category)

- high impact
- moderately high impact
- little impact
- no impact

If you responded "high" or "moderate" impact, please describe the problem that most impacts your satisfaction with your present relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for completing this section. Please continue and read the instructions printed on the enclosed Administration Booklet. Place your answers on the answer sheet by filling in the TRUE circle (T) or the FALSE circle (F). The researcher respects your right to not answer any given question; while some of the questions represent sensitive information, the more complete information you provide, the more confidence there will be in the results.

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey.

**APPENDIX I**

**WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE  
ADMINISTRATION BOOKLET AND ANSWER SHEET**

**NEXT PAGE**

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APPENDIX J

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please place all materials (Questionnaire, Administration Booklet, Answer Sheet, Consent Form, etc) in the unmarked envelope, and then place it in the prepaid self addressed mailer and return it to my supervisor:

Dr M. Dennis Kimberley, C.S.W.,  
School of Social Work  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
St. John's, Newfoundland,  
A1B 3X8

The information that you have provided will be of great value/in my study.

Again, Thank you

Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.

- \* Note that there was a mistake in the last sentence of this document. This page of the questionnaire was forwarded to the respondents with the following adjustment: "value/in".

**APPENDIX K**

**List of Variables In Researcher's Questionnaire**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Variable Name</u>
Variable 1	Sex
Variable 2	# of Years Married
Variable 3	Age at Marriage
Variable 4	Present Age
Variable 5	First Marriage
Variable 6	# of Times Previously Married
Variable 7	Cause of End of Marriage
Variable 8	Blend Male
Variable 9	Blend Female
Variable 10	# With You
Variable 11	Age of Youngest
Variable 12	Age of Oldest
Variable 13	New Children
Variable 14	# of New With You
Variable 15	Age of Youngest With You
Variable 16	Age of Oldest With You
Variable 17	Adult Children Living Away
Variable 18	Contact
Variable 19	Religion



**List of Variables (Cont.)**

Variable 20	Change Religion at Marriage
Variable 21	Level of Religion
Variable 22	Employment Outside Home
Variable 23	Employment Status
Variable 24	Occupation
Variable 25	Income
Variable 26	Pregnant Before Marriage
Variable 27	Child Before Marriage
Variable 28	# of Children Before Marriage
Variable 29	Satisfaction With Present Marriage
Variable 30	Satisfaction With Present Relationship
Variable 31	Satisfaction With Increasing Years
Variable 32	Years More Satisfying
Variable 33	Frequency Disagreements Settled
Variable 34	Time to Settle Disagreements
Variable 35	Frequently Avoid Disagreements
Variable 36	Accommodations of Disagreements
Variable 37	Decisions Shared
Variable 38	Who Makes Decisions
Variable 39	Dominant Person (Decisions)
Variable 40	Dominant Person (Perceptions)
Variable 41	Open Communication

**List of Variables (Cont.)**

Variable 42	Shared Time Together
Variable 43	Trust
Variable 44	Similar Values
Variable 45	Respect for Each Other
Variable 46	Agreement in Child Raising
Variable 47	Capacity for Flexibility for Change
Variable 48	Understanding
Variable 49	Religion
Variable 50	Honesty
Variable 51	Similar Life Goals
Variable 52	Commitment
Variable 53	Spouse Occupation
Variable 54	Income
Variable 55	My Occupation
Variable 56	Social Activities
Variable 57	Children
Variable 58	Communication
Variable 59	Friends
Variable 60	Extended Family
Variable 61	Shared Intimacy
Variable 62	Fidelity
Variable 63	Sexual Expression

**List of Variables (Cont.)**

Variable 64 Other Factors  
Variable 65 Infidelity  
Variable 66 Impact of Infidelity  
Variable 67 Physical Abuse  
Variable 68 Impact of Abuse

**Family Strength Scale (Olson, 1987) (Variable 69 - Variable 80)**

Variable 69 Express Feelings  
Variable 70 Worry  
Variable 71 Trust and Confide  
Variable 72 Same Problems  
Variable 73 Loyalty to Family  
Variable 74 Accomplishing Difficulties  
Variable 75 Critical  
Variable 76 Similar Values and Beliefs  
Variable 77 Things Work Out Well  
Variable 78 Members Respect One Another  
Variable 79 Many Family Conflicts  
Variable 80 Proud of Family

Var. 69 to Var. 80 = Var. 95 (Family Strengths)  
Var. 95 (Family Strengths) = (Var. 69 - Var. 70 + Var.  
71- Var. 72 + Var. 73 - Var. 74 - Var. 75 + Var.76  
+ Var. 77 + Var. 78 - Var. 79 + Var. 80 + 30)

**List of Variables (Cont.)**

Variable 81 Solved Problems

Variable 82 Past Problem Impact

**Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) (Snyder, 1981)  
(Variable 83 - Variable 93)**

Variable 83 Conventionalization (CNV)

Variable 84 Global Distress Scale (GDS)

Variable 85 Affective Communication (AFC)

Variable 86 Problem Solving Communication (PSC)

Variable 87 Time Together (TTO)

Variable 88 Disagreement About Finances (FIN)

Variable 89 Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX)

Variable 90 Role Orientation (ROR)

Variable 91 Family History of Distress (FAM)

Variable 92 Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC)

Variable 93 Conflict Over Child Raising (CCR)

Variable 94 # of Children

**APPENDIX L**  
**MARITAL SATISFACTION INVENTORY (MSI)**  
**GUIDE TO THE WPS TEST REPORT**

**NEXT PAGE**

**Lasting Marriage Page 206**

**APPENDIX M**

**WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE PERMISSION**

**NEXT PAGE**



WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES  
Publishers And Distributors Since 1948

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Dear Customer:

Thank you for completing a Western Psychological Services Qualification Questionnaire. Based on the information submitted, you meet WPS criteria for purchasing the level of materials indicated below.

To aid our order processing department and avoid the possibility of delays to your orders, please indicate, on your orders, that a Qualification Questionnaire is on file at WPS.

We appreciate your cooperation in assisting us to maintain high ethical standards in the distribution and use of psychological tests. If your qualifications change, or if you disagree with your current rating, please let us know.

- A ( ) All materials.
- B ☒ All materials except advanced clinical instruments such as the MMPI and Luria-Nebraska.
- C ( ) General screening and instructional materials only.
- D ( ) Books and other unrestricted materials only.
- E ( ) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- F ☒ Must be under professional supervision.



August 29, 1988

Bert Bennett, B.S.W.  
28 Armstrong Avenue  
Corner Brook, Nfld.  
Canada A2H 3A5

Dear Mr. Bennett:

Thank you for your recent letter in which you re-apply for a WPS Research Discount for use in your graduate study, investigating marital satisfaction, at Memorial University.

Western Psychological Services hereby authorizes you for its 20% Research Discount, to be applied against the cost of Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) materials to be used in your above-referenced study, with the following conditions:

- 1) No reproduction or adaptation of the materials may be made in any format, for any purpose, without our prior written permission;
- 2) Because you're a student, you may need to order and use the materials under the direct supervision of a qualified professional. Please complete the enclosed "Application to Purchase and Use Assessment Materials," have it signed by your supervising faculty member, and return it to WPS with your order; and
- 3) All materials must be used ethically and for the purposes and in the manner for which they were intended.

The discount is not retroactive but may be applied effective immediately until discount authorization expires on August 31, 1989. When placing orders by mail, please be certain to enclose a copy of this letter of discount authorization.

WPS requests one copy of all articles (including theses, journal submissions, convention papers, etc.) which use the data obtained through the use of our materials. The documents should be marked to the attention of the WPS Research Coordinator.





Bert Bennett  
August 29, 1988  
Page Two of Two

With regard to Dr. Kimberly's request for a WPS Research Discount, please ask Dr. Kimberly to write directly to my attention with the following information: A brief description of the nature of his study (including what he intends to do with the results), an estimated time frame for completion of the research, and the estimated quantities of MSI materials necessary to conduct the study. Upon receipt of the requested information we will consider Dr. Kimberly's request.

Your continued interest in the MSI is appreciated, and we look forward to hearing the results of your research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Susan Dunn Weinberg  
Assistant to the President

SDW:se  
Enclosures



WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES  
Publishers And Distributors Since 1948

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March 5, 1987

Bert J. Bennett, B.S.W.  
61 Brookfield Road  
Parkview Manor  
Apartment 306  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
CANADA A1E 3V1

Dear Mr. Bennett:

Thank you for your correspondence of February 27, which was delivered to this office via special delivery late yesterday afternoon. Your order is being processed and will be sent to you under separate cover.

For your reference, Western Psychological Services has authorized you for a 20% Research Discount to be applied against the purchase of Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) materials to be used in your master's thesis. The discount has been applied against your current order, and may be used again as necessary until its expiration date of December 31, 1987.

With regard to the copyright consent form you enclosed with the order, WPS's policy is not to grant reprint permissions for any of our publications unless there is a compelling reason for such a request. Our suggestion to graduate students with inquiries such as yours is for you to bind into your thesis the materials you have purchased, rather than make reproductions of these materials to include in your study. If you find it impossible to comply with the above suggestion, please write to our Rights and Permissions Department and explain why you need to reproduce the materials, as well as which specific components of the MSI you wish to reprint.

Finally, Western Psychological Services will not authorize microfilmed copies of our test materials, due to the public availability of the medium. While we regret any inconvenience this may cause, we hope you can appreciate our concern with ethical considerations.

Your interest in the MSI is appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Susan Yarn Weinberg/  
Rights and Permissions

SDW:se

**APPENDIX N**

**PERMISSION TO USE FAMILY STRENGTHS SCALE**

**NEXT PAGE**



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

Family Social Science  
290 McNeal Hall  
1985 Buford Avenue  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108  
(612) 625-7250

## PERMISSION TO USE FAMILY INVENTORIES

I am pleased to give you permission to use the instruments included in Family Inventories. You have my permission to duplicate these materials for your clinical work, teaching, or research project. You can either duplicate the materials directly from the manual or have them retyped for use in a new format. If they are retyped, acknowledgements should be given regarding the name of the instrument, developers' names, and the University of Minnesota.

If you are planning to use FILE, A-FILE, and F-COPES, you need to obtain separate permission from Dr. Hamilton McCubbin. His address is 1300 Linden Drive, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

Separate permission is also required to use the ENRICH inventory in either clinical work or research. This is because the inventory is computer scored and is distributed through the PREPARE/ENRICH office. For your clinical work, we would recommend that you consider using the entire computer-scored Inventory. We are willing, however, to give you permission to use the sub-scales in your research. We will also provide you with the ENRICH norms for your research project.

In exchange for providing this permission, we would appreciate a copy of any papers, thesis, or reports that you complete using these inventories. This will help us in staying abreast of the most recent development and research with these scales. Thank you for your cooperation.

In closing, I hope you find the Family Inventories of value in your work with couples and families. I would appreciate feedback regarding how these instruments are used and how well they are working for you.

Sincerely, -

David H. Olson, Ph.D.  
Professor

DHO:vmw

FAMILY INVENTORIES PROJECT (FIP)  
Director: David H. Olson, Ph.D.

**APPENDIX O**

**LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE  
OF THE SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**NEXT PAGE**



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND  
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1C 5S7

Department of History

Telex: 016-4101  
Telephone: (709) 753-1200

30 June 1989

TO: Dennis Kimberley  
FROM: G.S. Kealey  
SUBJECT: Bennett thesis proposal

---

A sub-committee of the Senate Research Committee, chaired by myself and composed of Dr. Glenn Sheppard, Dr. Cathryn Button, and Mr. Malcolm Grant, reviewed the thesis proposal of Mr. Bennett. We recommend that the thesis proposal be approved if the following changes are made:

1) To insure the anonymity of subjects, especially in the case of a small sample, a "double-envelope" system should be administered. By this we mean that the participant should seal the questionnaire in an unmarked envelope and then insert it in a second envelope to be used only to track response. The outside envelope and tracking should be conducted by an individual, perhaps the thesis supervisor, who would destroy all lists before giving the unmarked questionnaires to the researcher;

- 2) The consent form, p. 62, should be amended as follows:
- a) delete paragraph four;
  - b) delete paragraph five;
  - c) add new concluding paragraph as follows:

While the completion of the questionnaires may provide you with some interesting information about your marriage, it should in no way be interpreted as a measure of the quality of your marriage.

Page 2  
30 June 1989

3) Participants should be informed that information about the findings of the project will be available upon request by telephone from the School of Social Work after completion of the Study. ^

G.S. Kealey  
Professor of History

/jdb

cc Dr. Niall Gogan, Associate Vice-President (Research)  
Dr. Lars Fahraeus, Chair, Senate Research Committee  
Dr. Frank Hawkins, Director, School of Social Work  
Chairperson, Ethics Committee, School of Social Work  
Dr. Glenn Sheppard, Educational Psychology  
Dr. Cathryn Button, Psychology  
Mr. Malcolm Grant, Psychology  
Dr. Leslie Bella, Chairperson, Graduate Studies, School of Social Work  
Mr. Bert J. Bennett, c/o School of Social Work









